STUDIES IN INDIAN HISTORY

Punjab Through the Ages

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VOLUME 2

Editors

S.R. BAKSHI • RASHMI PATHAK

The Indian sub-continent, particularly the North-Western regions including the Punjab, had to face most arduous and difficult situations from time to time. Indeed the affluence of the people of this region was the main target of foreigners. But they were given a bold resistance through the ages. The four volumes deal with various significant phases of the rulers, people and their capabilities which in fact paid them rich dividends. The available material has been properly utilised in all these volumes.

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Volume – 2

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S.R. Bakshi
Rashmi Pathak

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Preface

The Punjab had been the victim of foreign onslaughts from the North-Western regions of Indian sub-continent. The main aim of these invasion was to take advantage of the riches of the people as well as to establish their administration here. But it goes to the credit of the bravery and fearlessness of the people of Punjab that they checkmated these onslaughts and did not allow to tarnish the name of their ancestors. Their bravery indeed has been dealt with in a comprehensive way. Particularly, the role of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is highly appreciable. Thus the Punjab and its people did not lay behind in their acts of administrative capability.

The Punjab Through the Ages have been evaluated into four volumes with comprehensive contents. These volumes deal with the Punjab and NWFP, the historical notes, the land and the people, religions, the clergy, life of Guru Nanak Dev, the misls in various regions of the North-West of the Punjab, military administration, socio-cultural movements in the region, prominent chiefs of the Punjab, Tipu Sultan and his defeat, annexations and political readjustments.

The second volume has surveyed the administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who ruled over Punjab and the adjoining regions for about four decades, the themes covered are the prevailing political condition, ancestors of the Maharaja, emergence of Ranjit Singh at a fairly young age, British interference, the Anglo-Sikh relations, conquests and annexations, consolidation of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar, the Anglo-Sikhs war and Maharaja Dalip Singh.

The third volume deals with various significant phases of the freedom movement having deep bearing on Punjab and the

participation of important persons. The theme commences with the firing in Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar and ends with the attainment of Independence. Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and other have been highlighted.

The volume four has deep bearing on disturbances, Lord William Bentinck and his administration, era of Lord Dulhousie, Sardar Ajit Singh, socio-cultural movements in the Punjab, rights and duties of human beings, ethics, Guru Granth Sahib and Gems from the Sikh Scriptures.

The theme indeed has been well-knit into fifteen chapters based on the available material from various academic institutions.

All these volumes have been dealt with from various angles, viz, political, social, economic, regional etc. Hopefully, they explain the most significant phases of the Punjab through the ages.

We have collected the material from several academic institutions, viz the Sapru House Library, Indian Council of Historical Research Library, Delhi University Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Jamia Millia Islamia Library and Jawaharlal Nehru University Library and we are thankful to the members of these institutions for their kind support during our researches. We have also collected the material from some of the published works of eminent authors in order to fill up the gaps in these volumes. We indeed feel much beholden to these scholars.

Editors

Contents

1

Political Condition

The territorial expansion of the East India Company's government in several regions of our sub-continent achieved remarkable success regarding its policy of trade and commerce which was initiated earlier by the Court of Directors in England with the faithful support of its civilian bureaucrats and defence personnel functioning from the occupied centres in the east and south of India where they had to wage an incessant struggle for their survival as well as to establish a firm footing for the Company's interests. This kind of style was in operation with complete financial support from the Court of Directors who always wished to take advantage to the mutual bickerings and military weaknesses of local rulers as well as the foreign powers with commercial interests in India. In fact after the complete breakdown of the Mughal Empire, the Company's government took full advantage to exploit the 'thin unity' among the Indian rulers scattered in various regions. They could not unite on account of personal prejudices and jealousy' opposed mostly single-handed or joined with the Company's government and thus strengthened the cause of the latter against their own 'kith and kin'.

The struggle lasted for a few decades and having edge over the expanding commercial and territorial interests of the French, the Portuguese and the Dutch, the East India Company established its hold firmly in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. Its expansion was systematic and swift and by the end of the eighteenth century it had its sway over a major portion of our country. Soon it established its Residencies in several princely states in order to establish better administrative control over them. It now had its coveted eyes on the northwestern region, specially the Punjab, which ruled by several *misls*, had come under the sway of Maharaja Ranjit Singh the powerful

ruler of them all. In fact, the polity of the Sikh brotherhood was associated with the name of Guru Gobind Singh.

An exhaustice survey of the socio-political history of the *misls* in the Punjab has been done by S.M. Latif in his History of the Punjab. It showed the struggle for survival among several misls at a time when Ranjit Singh emerged as the Maharaja at Lahore.

After the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1766-67, the Sikh chiefs belonging to different areas on both sides of the river Sutlej settled in various groups or formations, commonly known as the *misls.*[1] The word *misl* is an Arabic word which means 'equal' or alike. J.D. Cunningham describes the *misls* as 'theocratic confederate feudalism.[2]

These *misls* were headed by ambitious chiefs who were engaged in internecine strifes amongst themselves for capturing others' territories and thus organising, consolidating and strengthening their military and administrative sway in the Punjab. As a consequence of this continuous conflict for power, there emerged a strong and inchallenged leader in Ranjit Singh who brought most of the chiefs of these *misls* under his suzerainty, assumed the title of Maharaja of the Punjab and soon came into conflict with the British who too were trying to expand their commercial and territorial interests eastward.

The Sikh *misls* had serious religious and racial differences. The chieftains, therefore, were never unified for any common military action against the enemy. Instead, they were always pitched against one another. The Bhangi *misl* was divided into three armed camps with their headquarters at Lahore, Gujrat and Amritsar. Besides, Kanheyas were pitted against the Ramgarhias and the latter were hostile to the Ahluwalias. The Sukerchakia *misl* did not see eye to eye with the Bhangi *misl* and the Bhangis were inimical to the Kanheyas. All these factors proved favourable for Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh was born on 13 November 1780 in a small fortress town of Budrukhan near Jind which was the home town of his mother Raj Kaur,[8] the daughter of Sardar Gajpat Singh, the ruler of Jind. His father, Sardar Mahan Singh, the chief of the Sukerchakia *misl,* with headquarters at Gujranwala, breathed his last in 1790 and young Ranjit Singh succeeded to the *gadi* of the *misl* at the age of ten.

In 1790, Ranjit Singh assumed the leadership of the Sukarchakia *misl*. At that time, he was not a leading Sikh *misaldar* as his authority was only prevalent in a few districts of the Rachna *Doab* and the Chaj *Doab*. Although he was only ten years old, when his father died, he had already accompanied him no some expeditions against the Sikh chiefs.[4]

'Ranjit Singh owed little of his future greatness to his early training. His education was utterly neglected and he grew to manhood without learning either to write. All the knowledge, he gained in his childhood, related to field sports and the art of war, in both of which he displayed the daring and ability which marked his subsequent career. Before he had reached the age of ten, he had already accompanied his father on military expeditions, and on more than one occasion had been in imminent danger of his life.'[5]

'Ranjit Singh was possessed, however of an intellect which indulgence could not permanently could, and of a powerful physique which withstood for many years his habitual excesses.'[6]

'In the 1790s, the Punjab looked like a jig-saw puzzle consisting of fourteen pieces with five arrows piercing it from the sides. Twelve of these fourteen pieces were the Sikh *misls;* the other two, the Pathan-controlled district of Kasur in the neighbourhood of Lahore, and Hansi in the south-east under the English adventurer, George Thomas.'[7]

When Ranjit Singh assumed the leadership of the Sukerchakia *misl,* the region between Jhelum and Sutlej was mostly under administrative control of the *misls.* The powerful Bhangi *misl* over ruled the districts of Gujrat, Sialkot, Lahore and Amritsar and they were as under an independent Sikh chief, Sardar Jodh Singh. The region surrounding Gujranwala was under the Sukerchakia *misl* and it administered the areas around Sialkot, Gujranwala, Pind-dadan Khan and Miani. The region of the *Doab,* between Amritsar and Ludhiana, was divided among various chief. The Kanheyas had their headquarters at Batala in the Gurdaspur district, and the Ahluwalias administered Kapurthala. The Ramgarhias controlled some areas in the districts of Gurdaspur, and Amritsar as well as in the Jullundur Doab. The region between Lahore and Multan was divided amongst the Pathans of Kasur, the Nakai *misl* chiefs of Pokpatan and the Sials

of Jhang. Besides, a number of Muslim and Rajput chieftains administered Rajouri, Bhimbar, Jammu and the adjoining areas. A Hindu Raja, Sansar Chand ruled over the Kangra hills. Chamba belonged to another chief *i.e.* Raja Charat Singh.[8]

Geographically, the Punjab was vulnerable to attacks from north-west frontiers. The Afghans always took advantage of the weaklings in this region and captured many areas time and again. As early as 1752, Ahmad Shah Abdali had conquered the Punjab and annexed it to the Afghan dominions. The Sikh chiefs, however unitedly drove out Ahmad Shah. His son, Timur Shah, tried to recover this region, but failed to achieve his object on account of the tough and united military action of the local chiefs. In 1793, when Shah Zaman ascended the throne of Kabul, he planned to satiate his thirst and to fulfil the cherished aims of his forefathers. Within a span of two years, he succeeded in defeating some chiefs and thus conquering the territory up to Hassan Abdal. In 1797, he captured Lahore. Thereafter, he planned to advance towards Delhi, but his plan did not materialise as he had to undertake a hasty retreat on account of a rebellion engineered by his half-brother, Mahmud.

In 1797 and the following year, when Shah Zaman, the grandson of 'India's frequent invader', Ahmad Shah Abdali, occupied Lahore without any kind of serious opposition from the Sikh chiefs, the Afghan ruler had to go back to his country on account of a serious domestic revolt. While crossing the flooded Jhelum river, the Afghan monarch lost twelve of his guns, and not being able to wait for their extrication, he promised Ranjit Singh the grant of the city and district of Lahore with the title of Raja, if he could manage to send them to him. Ranjit Singh undertook the task with earnestness, rescued eight guns and sent them to Peshawar. Shah Zaman kept his promise and restored Lahore to Ranjit Singh.[9]'The acquisition of Lahore in July 1799 with the legally acquired title of Raja made Ranjit Singh, now in his twentieth year, a very powerful chief. The Sikh barons were filled with alarm at his success...'[10]

'Lahore was, about this time, governed by the three rulers, Lehna Singh, Gujar Singh and Sobha Singh. They were unscrupulous, drunken, profligate and tyrannical. How these men rose to power and obtained possession of Lahore, has been fully described in the sketch

of the history of the Bhangi *misl*. The chiefs were now dead, but their sons were alive, Lehna Singh had a son, Chet Singh; Gujar Singh, a son, Sahib Singh and two other sons, Sukha Singh and Fateh Singh; and Sobha Singh, a son, Mohar Singh. The Mohammedans who exercised the greatest influence in the town about this time, were Mian Ashak Mohammed and Mian Mohkam Din. Their opinion was taken on all important matters connected with the city and its neighbourhood, and they were known as the *Choudhris* of the city. Mian Ashak Mohammed's daughter was married to another equally opulent and influential *Choudhri* of the city, named Mian Badr-ud-din who happened to have a quarrel with some of the *Chhatrist* in the town. These *Chhatris,* wishing to avenge themselves on Badr-ud-din, went to Sardar Chet Singh, one of the *hakims* of Lahore, who at that time resided in the *Summan Burj* or Palace of Mirrors, in the fort of Lahore, and complained to him of what they represented to the revolting conduct of Badr-ud-din, whom they charged with holding clandestine correspondence with Shah Zaman, the ruler of Kabul.'[11]

The occupation of Lahore (July 1799) by Ranjit Singh greatly enhanced his prestige. It was not only an additional territorial gain, but also was a very serious challenge to the neighbouring Sikhs chiefs and the Afghan and Muslim rulers.

'He accomplished this object by skilful management rather than by force, and the city remained ever after in his hands. In the course of the next three or four years, his continual encroachments excited the fears and jealousy of all the Sirdars who had hitherto enjoyed independence; they perceived that it was the aim of Runjeet to reduce them to fealty and submission, yet so great were their jealousies and dissensions, that they could devise or attempt nothing to relieve themselves from his arbitrary exactions, and the forfeitures and resumptions with which he systematically visited the family of every chief that died.[12]

The conquest of Lahore was an important addition to Ranjit Singh's possessions which greatly enhanced his political prestige. It also meant the destruction of the chief centre of Bhangi influence in the province, although they still possessed strongholds at Gujarat and Amritsar. He also proclaimed himself the Maharaja of Lahore and established a mint of his own.

The relations between the Lahore chief and the East India Company's government developed in the year 1800, when Munshi Yusuf Ali Khan was commissioned by the British government to meet the Sikh chief with presents from the Governor-General, Lord Wellesley.[13] The main object of the British government was to know about the military resources of the Maharaja and also the condition of other chiefs in the Trans-Sutlej region. This was necessitated by the ever-increasing aggressive designs of the Company's government in the territories of the *Doad* and the Cis-Sutlej region.

After a span of five years, when the Maratha chief, Jaswant Rao Holkar, chased by the British soldiers under the command of Lord Lake, sought refuge at Beas, he requested the Sikh chief to lend his help against the Company's government. Ranjit Singh, shrewd as he was, did not show inclination of extending any kind of assistance—financial or military—to the helpless, and resourceless fugitive Maratha chief. Instead, he preferred to establish cordial and friendly relations with the British in one way or the other. He knew well that it would be not only unwise but also dangerous to annoy the powerful British government at a time, when he was not yet firmly established in a vast area of the Punjab, ruled by the independent chiefs of the *misls.* By a measure of caution, therefore, the Lahore chief deputed his confidant emissary, Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, to the camp of Lake to put forth friendly overtures to him. As a result of his efforts, the Treaty of Lahore was signed in January 1806.[14]

The Treaty of Lahore which contained a brief preamble and two articles was as follows.

'Sardar Ranjit Singh and Sardar Fateh Singh have consented to the following Articles of agreement, concluded by Lieutenant-Colonel Johan Malcolm, under the special authority of the Right Honourable Lord Lake, himself duly authorised by the Honourable Sir George Hilaro Barlow, Bart, Governor-General and Sardar Fateh Singh, as principal on the part of himself, and plenipotentiary on the part of Ranjit Singh.'

Article I.'Sardar Ranjit Singh and Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia hereby agree that they will cause Jaswant Rao Holkar to remove with

his army to the distance of thirty *coss* from Amritsar immediately, will never hereafter hold any further connection with him, or aid or assist him with troops, or in any other manner; whatever and they further agree that they will not in any way molest such of Jaswant Rao Holkar's followers or troops as are desirous of returning to their homes in the Deccan, but, on the contrary, will render them every assistance in their power for carrying such intention into execution.'

Article II.' The British Government hereby agrees, that in case a pacification should not be effected between that Government and Jaswant Rao Holkar, the, British army shall move from its present encampment, on the banks of the river Beas, as Jaswant Rao Holkar aforesaid shall have marched his army to the distance of thirty *coss* from Amritsar and that in any treaty which may hereafter he concluded between the British Government and Jaswant Rao Holkar, it shall be stipulated that immediately after the conclusion of the said treaty, Holkar shall evacuate the territories of the Sikhs, and march towards his own, and that he shall in no way, whatever injure or destroy such parts of the Sikh country as may lie in his route. The British Government further agrees that, as long as the said chieftains, Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh, abstain from holding, any friendly connection with the enemies of that government, or from committing any act of hostility on their own parts against the said government, the British armies shall never enter the territories of the said chieftains nor will the British Government form any plans for the seizure or sequestration of their possessions or property.'[15]

The fact that this treaty was negotiated and signed by the East India Company's government with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, shows that up to 1806, the former had not built unquestioned authority in the Punjab, but the latter was still his equal in status. Circumstances, however took a different turn, which greatly favoured Ranjit Singh in the coming few years. He successfully carried out campaigns against the rulers of Jhang in 1806, Hoshiarpur in the same year, Kasur during the next year, Gujrat in 1808 and various other places, and by 1809, he succeeded in absorbing the Central Punjab into a single well-knit, well organised and well administered Sikh state.[16]

Meanwhile, Holkar retired as he found himself helpless in securing any kind of assurance or assistance from the Sikh chief. On the other hand, Ranjit Singh felt secure from the interference of the British so far as his plans in the north-west of Sutlej were concerned.

The Sikh brotherhood was an established fact. It was the work of the successors of Guru Nanak. Nanak had preached the brotherhood of men, but this principle of fraternity, as applied to all mankind, is one of the weakest in practice, as the French Revolution and many other movements, political and religious, teach us. By precept and by example the successors of Guru Nanak sought to inculcate the supreme duty of service to the Sikhs in general and the sacrifice of the individual in the general body of the commonwealth. The visible external symbols of Sikh brotherhood, as also the habitual deference of the Gurus to the will of their disciples, made the brotherhood a power until a Sikh could write thus—"Where there is one Sikh, there is one Sikh; where there are two Sikhs, there is a company of saints; where there are five Sikhs, there is God."

The Central Government of the Sikhs during the *misl* period consisted of a tumultuous diet, the "Sarbat Khalsa," which met twice a year at Amritsar during the *Baisakhee* and the *Diwali.* They chose a leader by a majority of votes, but barely allowed him the dignity of *primus inter pares* during his temporary elevation. The confederacy was called *Khalsaji* and the grand army was called *Dal Khalsaji.* In civil life there was complete social equality amongst the Sikhs. In the meetings of the *Sarbat Khalsa,* every one could freely express his opinion. The decisions were by a majority of votes. The resolutions passed in the presence of the holy *Granth were Gurumatta.* The grand diet made decisions about the important expenditions to be undertaken and matters of general concern. The amount of contributions levied was reported to the assembly and divided among the chiefs in proportion to the number of their troops. The assembly was summoned by the Akalis. When the Sikhs met in such a gathering, every man forgot his personal quarrels. The first assembly was summoned by the Tenth Guru himself, the last in 1805. From the Sikh point of view, this grand diet of the confederation deliberated and resolved under the inspiration of an Invisible Being.

To the superficial observer, the Sikh constitution was an aristocracy, because the *sardars* or the chiefs of the confederacies played such an important part; but as Forster notes, popular power branched through many of its parts. The distinction accorded to the chiefs was a military necessity, a "self-preserving regard, nothing more."

The central government of the Sikh confederation, as is the case generally with this form of government, was very weak, in spite of its theocratic character. The *misls* were the component parts of the confederation. Every *misl* was, to all intents and purposes, independent. These *misls* possibly originated in a very natural way. The individuals joined the ranks of a chief or a *sardar,* whom they considered deserving of leadership on the grounds of valour, experience, wealth and birth. The booty was divided in proportion to the contribution of each group of horsemen, of course the chief's portion being first divided off. There was again further subdivision among the individuals composing each group. Each held his portion in absolute independence. There was no obligation except for common purposes. Slowly and steadily, however the powers of the *sardars* increased, their territories were extended, strong forts were built, their fighting strength increased and ultimately they emerged as twelve very powerful feudal chiefs of *misls.*

It must be remembered that the Sikh army consisted largely if not almost entirely of cavalry. The infantry was held in low estimation. Before the military reforms of Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs did not understand the use of artillery. The Punjab provided an excellent breed of horses, and the Sikh horsemen were very well-mounted. George Thomas, who had to fight with the Sikhs more than once, gives the following description of their arms and their method of fighting"

They were usually armed with a spear, a match-lock and a sabre. "With the enemy they engage in continuous skirmish. They advance and retreat until man and horse become tired. They then retreat to some distance where they leave their horses to graze, take a very frugal meal and begin skirmishing once again. They have no tents, their cakes of flour serve as dishes and plates. Each horseman

has two blankets, one for himself and another for his horse, kept beneath the saddle. These with a grainbag and a heelrope comprise the baggage of a Sikh...The rapidity of their marching is incredible. Some of the Sikhs also used bows and arrows. The inlaying of fire-arms was their only luxury.

A struggle for supremacy began in the seventies, and it was inevitable. The chiefs degenerated from self-sacrificing fighters for the national cause into self-seeking freebooting barons. We can well illustrate our point with the help of science. If we place an iron bar in a coil and electrize the coil, the iron bar becomes magnetic. But when the electricity is gone, the magnetism also goes with it. The impulse given by Guru Govind Singh and the presence of the foreign danger had given the Sikhs a much-needed electric current and the political sense of brotherhood had become magnetic. When that was gone, its magnetism disappeared and the Sikhs fell to wrangling among themselves. Feudalism everywhere makes for chaos and anarchy and Sikh history is no exception. In the mutual struggle for ascendency the Sukerchakia *misl* prevailed, but the separatist tendency of the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs triumphed with the help of a foreign power. "Theocratic confederate feudalism gave place to a military monarchy."

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2

The Ancestors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

Over three centuries before Ranjit Singh was born, Kalu, a Jat of Waraech Got, moved to village named Sansi, situated about 4 or 5 kos west of Amritsar. This happened in 1470. The village at the time, was the resort of a notorious wandering and plundering tribe of the same name. Here a son was born to him who was later named as Jaddoman. Kalu left this village shortly after and moved to an other village named Sand, where he died in 1488. Jaddo-man was a brave man with the spirit of adventurers. He is said to have taken up the profession of the Sansi Tribe and was killed during one of his plundering expeditions, in 1515. His son Galeb, followed the foot-steps of his father and is said to have been the very best in his profession. He died in 1549, leaving behind him a son named Kiddoh who, about the year 1555, moved to Sukerchak, a small village about 1½ kos south of Gujranwala. It was this village, which gave the name Sukerchakia, to the misl, the successors of Kiddoh organised in the eighteenth century.

Kiddoh was a man of peaceful dispositions. He was God-fearing and started peaceful life of a labourer at the land. He died in 1578, leaving behind two sons Rajadeb and Premu. Rajadeb continued the peaceful and honourable life of his father and opened a small grocer's shop in his village. He was not a very much learned man but knew the Landa characters in which he was able to read and write. And for this, he was respected in his village as a man of letters and wisdom. Besides, he also continued the agricultural pursuits of his father.

Rajadeb died about 1620, and left behind three sons, Nilu, Telu and Takht Mal. The first-two died while still young, while Takht Mal

expanded his business yet further. By this time, the family had collected considerable cash, and besides the business of shopkeeping of his father, he also started lending money to the people on interest, and within a short time became a banker of name and fame. He was considered to be an important man of his village. He died in 1653 and was survived by two sons Balu and Bara.

Bara was a man of religious dispositions and fell under the influence of the Sikh faith, started by Baba Nanak. He was a passionate reader of Granth, the sacred book of the Sikhs. At the age of 25, he decided to receive Sikh baptism at Amritsar and proceeded thither. But due to some accident, he could not reach Amritsar to fulfill his desire, but this rather sharpened his interest in Sikhism, and the rest of his life was spent in preaching about, the philosophy of Guru Nanak in the adjoining villages.

Bara died in 1679, before this, he was an owner of about half the land of his village Sukerchak. He was a man of still more importance and fame, both as a preacher and as a man of means. An his death bed, he left for his son Budda, who at the time was about 9 years of age, a dying injunction to proceed to Amritsar and receive the Pahul. Budda did proceed Amritsar, on attaining the age of discretion[1], and is considered to be one of those lucky persons who received Pahul from the very hands of Guru Gobind Singh. "He was, however not a man of peaceful disposition, as his father and grandfather had been, but was courageous, enter-prising and sagacious.[2] After having received the baptism of the 10th Sikh Guru, his name had been converted from Budda to Budh Singh. Singh means a lion and in his daring adventures, Budh Singh was actually no less than a lion. The success which attends his exploits, soon won for him the reputation of being the boldest and the most resolute of the "Sikhs in the country.[3]" On his body, this man had as many as forty scars of swords, spears and bullets.[4] "The mare on which Budh Singh used to ride was a piebald, and was as famous in the country as its rider. People called this mare Desi, hence the nickname Desu given to Buddha Singh. It is said he swam across the Jhelum, the Ravi and Chenab fifty times on his mare...He was good humoured, ready witted and merciful to the oppressed ...He died of apoplexy in 1716. His wife, overwhelmed with grief at his death, ran a sword through her

heart. The bodies of husband and wife were burnt together.[5] Budh Singh was survived by his two sons, Nodh Singh and Chanda Singh. It was from the latter that the Sondhanwalia family originated.

Nodh Singh married the daughter of a wealthy land lord of Majitha, and constructed a big house for himself in the village Sukerchak, of the type of a small fortress. After constructing this house, it occurred to him that when he had built for himself such a big house, he should also have some companions to guard it and protect it from the Afghan invaders. Soon, therefore he raised a band of 30 horseman, which may be called the foundation of the Sukerchakia misl.

With these 30 horsemen, he became famous for his bravery and courage, and was dreaded from Rawalpindi to the banks of Sutlej. His influence increased simultaneously with his wealth. When in 1730, according to Latif, Nodh Singh joined the Fyzulpuria misl of Nawab Kapur Singh, about the time of the first invasion of the Abdali King, Ahmad Shah, and, "by plundering the baggage and the stragglers of the invading army, enriched himself and his associates." Now looked upon as the chief of Sukerchak, he amassed his wealth there. In 1747 he received a gun shot wound in the head, in a fight with some Afghans, of which he died five years later, in 1752, leaving behind four sons, Charat Singh, Dal Singh, Chet Singh and Mangi Singh.

Charat Singh

After the death of Nodh Singh, his son Charat Singh, the grandfather of Ranjit Singh, succeeded to the patrimony. A "Brave Jat Sirdar," as Payne calls him, "who repeatedly distinguished himself in the early struggles with Ahmad Shah,[6] he separated himself from the Fyzulpuria misl, raised his strength to 150 horsemen, "took forcible possession of some villages, united with another successful leader like himself, and formed a misl, of which he became the active chief, calling it after the name of his native village." Sukerchak.[7] He made it a rule, not to admit into his misl a man unless he had received the Sikh baptism.[8] Amir Singh of Gujranwala, another brave and famous Leader and man of means, with whose help Charat Singh had been carrying on his exploits, gave his daughter in marriage to

the latter, and soon Charat Singh transferred his head quarters to Gujranwala. This marriage-tie with Amir Singh, whose depredations extended from the banks of the Jhelum to the walls of Delhi, and who "having acquired large territorial possessions in Gujranwala,...was looked upon as the chief man of the district, united the wealth and strength of the two Sardars," and the allied "chiefs, under one banner, headed the confederacy, though Amir Singh, on account of his age, was never able to take a prominent part in its affairs.[9]

At this time, a Mughal Faujdar ruled at Emnabad. He was a man of very harsh nature. His Hindu subjects were his main victims, who complained of it to Charat Singh. In the Summer of 1761, when the hateful activities of this Faujdar reached a height, with his 150 horsemen, Charat Singh attacked Emnabad and surrounded the fortress. The fight took place, but before it could prolong, Charat Singh fell upon the Faujdar with ten selected horsemen, and cut him to pieces. Charat Singh carried away from here, a huge booty and munitions from the Faujdar's arsnel.

The name of Charat Singh now spread all around. In the same year, to meet his wants, in place of the Katchi Sarae he possessed in Gujranwala, he built a mud fort [10] Khawaja Ubed, the governor of Lahore had for sometimes been feeling restive at the rising power of this young Sikh chief, and in 1760, he marched a strong force upon Gujranwala. Charat Singh had foreseen this development, and therefore he was not taken unaware. In the battle Charat Singh's forces completely routed the invading army, and Ubed Khan narrowly escaped with his life, leaving his "military stores and ammunition in the hands of the enemy."[11]

In 1762, Charat Singh plundered Abdali's camp, and soon after his retreat, he captured Wazirabad, Ahmadabad, Rohtas, Dhanni, Chakwal, Jalalpur, Pind Dadan Khan, Kot Sahib Singh and Raja-ka-kot, etc. This aroused the jealousy of other Sikh misls, particularly of the Bhangis.

Charat Singh marched upon Jammu in 1774. Raja Ranjit Deo of Jammu wanted to deprive his eldest son Brij Raj Deo from succession after his death, in favour of his youngest son Mian Dalel Singh. Charat Singh espoused the cause of Brij Raj, who had rebelled against his father. Ranjit Deo had called to his aid the Bhangis under

Jhanda Singh, at the time the most powerful of all the Sikh Sirdars.[12] He was also joined by Chamba, Kangra, Nurpur and Bashahir, while the Kanheyas under Sardar Jai Singh took sides with the Sukerchakias. The rival armies encamped within a few miles of each other on the Basanti river, and preparations were being made for battle, when Charat Singh was killed by the bursting of his own matchlock. This event would probably have given the victory to Ranjit Deo, had it not been counter balanced, on the following day, by the assassination of the Bhangi Chief, Jhanda Singh. The deaths of the two leaders brought about a cessation of hostilities, and the Sikh forces withdrew to their respective districts, leaving Ranjit Deo and his son to settle their quarrel as best as they could.[13]

Maha Singh

This event took place in 1774. Charat Singh left a large territory to his young son Maha Singh, then only ten years[14] old, whose mother Desan took charge for him during his minority. Sikh "ladies played an important part in the history of these warlike times" and Desan "ruled with vigour and diplomacy".[15] She was a shrewd and courageous woman, who ruled the misl with tact and ability."[16] She rebuilt the fort of Gujranwala, which had been destroyed by Abdali and also got the friendship between Ganda Singh Bhangi and Maha Singh, restored. In 1780 Maha Singh cut his "leading-strings and took the field at the head of his misl, to follow in his father's victorious steps."[17] Maha Singh had married Raj Kaur-Mai Malwain or Malwa Mother the daughter of Gajpat Singh of Jind, who in 1780, became the mother of our famous Maharaja, Ranjit Singh.

The Capture of Rassul Nagar

The first important exploit of Maha Singh was against Rassul Nagar. Situated on the East Bank of Chenab, Rassul Nagar was occupied by a Muslim tribe named Chattas. Its ruler Pir Mohammed is said to have been a sworn enemy of the Hindus, and no trader, a merchant or even a way farer could pass this way without paying a price to him. Maha Singh had heard of it and towards the close of the year 1778, assisted by Jai Singh Kanehya, Maha Singh marched on Rassul Nagar at the head of about 6,000 troops. The town was

besieged and the blockade continued for full four months, ushering in the new year, 1779 as well. The blockade is said to have been so complete and perfect that not a grain of wheat could pass into the town.

All the surrounding country was depopulated. The people inside the town began to starve. Pir Mohammed's appeals to Bhangis went in vian, no help was forthcoming from this side and finally Pir Mohammed had to shut himself up in his fort. The siege of the fort now started and it cluminated in the Muslim chief surrendering himself to the Sikh chief alongwith his family on the condition of a good treatment.[18] Rassul Nagar was occupied by the Sikhs and its name changed to Ramnagar. Dal Singh, a lieutenant of Maha Singh was appointed as the governor of this place. The fame of Maha Singh, as a result of this victory, began to spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, and many Sardars who had so far been the dependents of the Bhangi misl, began to transfer their allegiance to him. At this time Maha Singh also conquered Alipur and changed its name to Akalgarh.

The Bhangi power had been broken as a result of the invasion of Timur Shah, the son of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The Bhangis had been expelled from Multan and Bhawalpur. When the forces of Timur Shah retreated, Maha Singh decided to take advantage of the weak position of these chiefs. Pindi Bhattian was pillaged. Sahiwal was attacked, and Jhang was sacked and Isa Khel and Musa Khel were captured. All these territories belonged to Bhangis and the weak charactered misaldar Desa Singh, having failed to protect these territories, invited Sahib, Singh Bhangi, his brother-in-law and the son of Gujar Singh Bhangi—one of the three occupants of Lahore—to his help. But before Sahib Singh could come to Desa Singh's aid, he fell out with his own younger brother Sukha Singh. Sahib Singh rather requested Maha Singh for help and with this help, he attacked and killed Sukha Singh. This infuriated Gujar Singh, who crossed the Ravi and the Chenab, and marched his forces on Gujrat, the possession of Sahib Singh. Gujarat was finally captured by him. But the son sought the forgiveness of his father and moved with paternal affection, Gujar Singh had to pardon Sahib Singh. All these developments did help Maha Singh escape the trouble at the Bhangi hands.

Next victim of the rising ambition of Maha Singh was *Kotli*, in the neighbourhood of Sialkot. A heavy indemnity was realised from the inhabitants of the place. Maha Singh, writes Latif, after this, under the pretence of holding an important consultation, "invited a very large number of Sardars; and upon their complying with his invitation, seized and imprisoned twenty-two of the principal chiefs among them. Charat Singh, Kalalwala, Dia Singh, nephew of Sahib Singh, Dhanna Singh and Mihan Singh Wadaha were of the number thus apprehended. These Sardars obtained their release only on payment of heavy nazranas according to their rank and wealth."[19]

Quarrel with Jammu

Ranjit Deo of Jammu had died and his son Brij Deo who succeeded him, was incapable of conducting himself efficiently. He had put his younger brother Mian Dalel Singh, behind the bars, and due to his ill-treatment had alienated almost all the nobles. Taking advantage of his weak position, Bhangis took possession of some of his outlying territories. The Jammu ruler made an appeal to Jai Singh and Hakikt Singh Kanheyas for help, with whose help he was actually able to reconquer Karianwala, one of the territories he had lost to the Bhangis. But soon after, we learn, the Kenheya chiefs went over to the Bhangis and helped the Bhangis not only to re-occupy Karianwala, but alongwith them, they also planned a march direct upon Jammu. Brij Deo, on this, appealed to Maha Singh, with whom he had already exchanged turbans as a token of everlasting friendship,[20] for assistance. "Maha Singh eagerly welcomed the chance of a conflict with his hereditary foes, and set out for Jammu with all the troops he could muster." The powerful combination of his enemies, however "was more than Maha Singh could withstand: his forces were defeated, while Brij Raj was compelled to pay tribute to the victorious misls.[21]

About six months after this, however when Brij Deo refused to pay tribute, the Kanheya chiefs invited Maha Singh to join them in raiding Jammu. Forgetting his pledge of friendship with the Jammu ruler, and with an eye on the riches of that country which had been amassed their due to the diversion thither of the trade flowing sometime through the Punjab plains, due to unsettled conditions in the Punjab, he signified his readiness to join. Hearing of this, Brij Deo fled to Trikoti Devi mountains. Maha Singh, on this side, bent upon playing

a diplomacy, lost no time in making preparations, and before the Kanheyas could appear on the scene, he marched on Jammu. Principal inhabitants of the town came out with rich presents to the Sukerchakia chief, but not satisfied, he sacked the town and utterly plundered the surrounding villages. This enraged Jai Singh Kanheya and Hakikat Sing died shortly after this affair, and the thirst for revenge died with him.

Conflict with the Kanheyas

Jai Singh Kanheya had, a paramount influence in the Punjab. Having taken Maha Singh, the son of Charat Singh Sukerchakia, under his protection, he aided the young chief in capturing Rassulnagar on the Chenab, from a Mahommedan family. But as Maha Singh's reputation increased, about 1785, he threw off his dependence upon Jai Singh so far as to interfere in the affairs of Jammu on his own account. His increasing wealth and the independence he had shown both roused the anger of Jai Singh.[22] When Maha Singh visited Amritsar on the Dewali of 1784, and approached the Kanheya chief with sweetmeats, he was insulted by Jai Singh Kanheya with the words. "Go away, you Bhagtia (dancing boy); I do not want to hear your sentimental talk". "This was too much to be borne in silence by so haughty and impervious a young chief as Maha Singh was."[23] "The spirit of the young chief being fired, he went away resolved to appeal to arms. He immediately invited Jasa Singh Ramgarhia who, his trans Sutlej territories having been captured by the Kanheyas, had fled across the Sutlej. He was only too glad to avail of this opportunity. Maha Singh also easily procured the aid of Sansar Chand Katoch of Kangra. Before the aid of Sansar Chand and the Ramgarhia chief could, however reach, already some actions had been fought between the Sukerchakias and the Kanheyas, and the latter had occupied some territories of Maha Singh. After this, however when the allied forces fell upon Jai Singh at Batala, the Kanheya forces were completely routed. Gurbux Singh Kanheya, the eldest son of Jia Singh, was killed, and the spirit of the old man was effectually humbled by this double sorrow. He was forced to restore to the Sukerchakias and the Ramgarhias all their possessions. Sansar Chand got the fort of Kangra, upon which his father and grandfather had set their eyes for long.

Soon, however with the determination to take vengeance on Maha Singh, Jai Singh recollected his spirit, and collecting the remnants of his troops, attacked Maha Singh at Naushera. But he was repulsed with a heavy loss, and fled to Nurpur, "where he shut himself up on the approach of the enemy."

Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbux Singh and prudent and sagacious lady, proposed there at the betrothal of Mehtab Kaur, her only daughter to Ranjit Singh, "the young son of Maha Singh, hoping thereby to unite the Sukerchakia and Kanheya families in a permanent bond of friendship and thus to secure for herself the sardari of the Kanheya misl upon the demise of her father in-law."[24] "This union proved very fortunate for the interest of the country, Maha Singh's reign in the Punjab, for many years after this marriage, being one of peace and prosperity."[25]

Although the remaining seven or eight years of Maha Singh's career were devoted by him to the extension of his influence, his life was generally that of peace, till 1792. It was in 1792 that Maha Singh entered once again into a major game, but before he could get the stipulated prize, his destiny laid violent hands upon him and cut short his life. The occasion arose when the question of succession to Gujar Singh Bhangi's estate was to be decided. Gujar Singh had two sons Sahib Singh, the eldest and Fateh Singh the youngest. Although Maha Singh had given formerly his sister in marriage to Sahib Singh, the latter was his most formidable opponent, and therefore, he decided to support the younger brother. A war was declared against Sahib Singh and Maha Singh demanded Gujarat to be ceded to him. Maha Singh marched upon the the town, Sahib Singh shut himself up in the Sodhra fort, which was besieged. The blockade continued for three months and the victory was at sight, when unfortunately, Maha Singh's illness became serious. He had remained in a state of delirium tremens for long during the siege. When, at the end of three months, his condition worsened, he had to be removed to Gujranwala and siege raised. Shortly after this he died.

When Maha Singh died in 1792, he was a young man of only twenty-seven summers "Brave, enterprising and prudent beyond his years." as Latif writes of him, he had lived a very stormy life. Had he lived a few years more he might perhaps have accomplished much of

that which later, his son Ranjit Singh did. But this was not to be. "He left to his son and successor a state beset by danger, but he bequeathed to him at the same time the qualities by which dangers are best overcome—courage combined with a natural genius for command, and enterprise tempered by prudence and foresight.[26]

REFERENCES

1. See Gordon, The Sikhs, p, 80.
2. Latif, History of the Punjab, p. 337.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
4. See Sir Lepel Griffin, 'The Punjab Chiefs,' i, p. 220.
5. Latif, p. 337.
6. Payne, A Short History of the Sikhs, pp. 66-67.
7. Gordon, 81.
8. Kanheya Lal, 'Twarikh-i-Punjab,' p. 119.
9. Latif, p. 338.
10. See Munshi Shahmat Ali, p. 51. Latif says that the fort was built in 1777. But this seems to a misprint. Because he himself writes that Charat Singh died in 1774.
11. Latif, p. 336.
12. Payne, p. 67.
13. *Ibid.*
14. See, Cunningham, 'History of the Sikhs'; forster, 'Travels,' i, p. 288; Moorcroft, Travels, p. 127; Latif, p. 344. It is wrong that Maha Singh was born in 1760, as M' Gregor suggests (History of the Sikhs, i, p. 150).
15. Gordon, p. 82.
16 Payne, p. 68.
17. Gordon, pp. 82-83.
18. Here Latif writes:- "Maha Singh put his seal on the Granth, binding himself not to molest Pri Mohammed if he surrendered his person. The Mohammedan chief, on receiving this assurance, came out unguarded, but was treacherously put under arrest by Maha Singh. His sons were tied to the mouths of guns and blown to plunder", this fact, however is not confirmed by other writers. See princep-'Origin of the Sikh power', p. 33.
19. Latif, p. 342.
20. See Payne, p. 68.

21. *Ibid.*, 8.
22. See Cunningham, History of the Sikhs.
23. Latif 343.
24. Latif, 344. According to Payne, however it was a sort of penalty that Maha Singh imposed upon the Kanheya chief, p. 60.
25. *Ibid.*, 344.
26. Payne, pp. 69-70.

3

Ranjit Singh and His Times

(A) EARLY LIFE

It has been almost agreed that Ranjit Singh was born on November, 2, 1780.[1] Maha Singh had died young, writes M' Gregor. "Thus leaving his son, a boy of eight years of age, in the hands of his mother and the Dewan, and under the control of his mother-in-law Sada Kaur, one of the most artful and ambitious women who figure in Sikh History."[2] This however, seems to be wrong. The accepted date of Maha Singh's death is 1792,[3] and if Ranjit Singh was born in 1780, in which there seems to be no doubt, he was 12 years of age when his father died.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that when his father died, Ranjit Singh was a boy of only tender age, and being yet too young. to rule, the affairs of his State fell to his mother and Dewan Lakhpat Rai. Ranjit Singh was unfortunate in this regard that he did not have a mother like that of Shivaji, who could inspire him into greatness. Nor could his tutors, Bhai Phagan Singh, and Daula Singh educate him in three Rs. because from his very childhood, he had been interested more in good marks manship than in books "All the knowledge he gained in his childhood related to field sports and the art of war, in both of which he displayed, the daring ability which marked his subsequent career."[4] Later when Wade visited Lahore, the Maharaja himself told him, that when his father died, he left 20,000 rounds of shot which he expended in firing at Marks.[5] Ranjit Singh's father, Maha Singh had high opinion regarding his son. Ranji Singh had accompanied him on several expeditions and seeing his courage and aptitude, he once had remarked that "The State of

Gujranwala will not be a sufficient kingdom for my brave son Ranjit Singh. He will one day carve out a great empire for himself."

Ranjit Singh had an attack of small-pox when he was only a child. Although he survived the attack, yet it left on his body permanent marks and deprived him of one eye. A writer amusingly remarked, "The Almighty deprived the Maharaja of one his eyes, so as to see the people of the different religions under his control with the very eye."

"The one-eyed boy grew up short of stature, and as chief of a Misl he seemed what might be called a "sport" among the Stalwart Jats who surrounded him."[6] Baron Van Hugel, a traveller, who visited his court, drew a pensketch of his personality. He writes, the left eye of Ranjit Singh, "Which is quite closed, disfigures him less than the other, which is always rolling about vide open and is much distorted by disease. The scars of the smallpox on his face do not run into one another but from so many dark pits in his grayish-brown skin; his shorn nose is swollen at the tip; the skinny lips are stretched tight over his teeth which are still good...but as soon as he mounts his horse and with his black shield at his back puts him on his mettle, his whole form seems animated by the spirit within, and assumes a certain grace of which nobody could believe it susceptible. In spite of the paralysis affecting one side, he manages his horse with the utmost ease."

Of him, writes Griffin, "Ranjit Singh although short of stature and disfigured by that cruel disease...was the beau ideal of soldier, strong, spare, active, courageous, and enduring. An excellent horseman, he would remain the whole day in the saddle without showing any sign of fatigue. His love for horses amounted to a passion."[7]

Several stories are told regarding courage, fortitude, and the presence of mind of Ranjit Singh as a young boy. Hashmat Khan, the Chatta Chief, whose possession lay on the banks of Chenab, felt jealous of the rising power of this young chief, and once when he was returning from a hunting excursion on a horse back,[8] the Chatta chief, who was "concealed in ambush on the way" undertook a hazardous task, "suddenly sprang up and attacked the youthful sportsman. The blow missed him, and struck the bridle, which it

severed in two. Ranjit Singh, coming up on his guard, fell violently on his intended assassion, and with one blow of the sword severed his head from his body. On the death of their chief, the Chattas submitted to Ranjit Singh, who annexed a great portion of the estates of the deceased to his own."[9]

Ranjit Singh had been betrothed to Mehtab Kaur, the daughter of the Kanheya chief Gurbux Singh and his wife Sada Kaur, in 1785, when he was only five years of age. Ranjit Singh married in 1796, and having on good moral influence of his mother, before assuming the direct responsibilities of administration, he spent his days in hunting, indulging in every kind of excesses and gratifying his youthful passions and desires."

He was only 17, when he decided to assume the powers directly. His government at that time is said to have been very unpopular. Sada Kaur was trying to use the influence of Ranjit Singh as a ladder to realise her own political ambitions. And his mother Raj Kaur and the Dewan, Lakhpat Rai, were too much buried in romance to think of the State Administration.[10] To regain the lost moral prestige, it is said, he brought up a case of conspiracy against Lakhpat Rai, and did a short work of him. Next he imprisoned his own mother, says Principe. But Captain Murray writes that "He dismissed the Dewan and caused his mother to be assassinated."

Major Carmichael, Smyth, Principe and some other European writers, seem to agree with this view. "These conclusions are not, however warranted by the recorded evidence in our possession,"[11] says N.K. Sinha.

Be that as it may, Ranjit Singh a assumed a direct control of his administration at an early age of 17, and appointing Dal Singh, his father's maternal uncle, his Prime Minister, started his political career forthwith.

(B) PUNJAB ON THE EVE OF RANJIT SINGH'S ACCESSION

All that was beautiful in Punjab, wrote principe, had died before Ranjit Singh was born. And it is a fact that when he acceded to power, chaos and confusion ruled supreme. The time of Ranjit Singh's accession to

power is one perhaps of the darkest periods in the History of the Punjab.

Disintegration of the Mughal Empire, and repeated invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali created chaos, and benefiting out of this, different ambitious Sikh Chiefs had carved out different principalities for themselves at different places. When Ranjit Singh acceded to power, there were in Punjab, twelve small Sikh states, or misls as they were called, one of which was the Sukerchakiya to which he himself belonged. Besides, there were seven small Muslim states, one small Hindu State and several very petty principalities which dotted the map of the Punjab. Most of these powers, however were weak, and they presented the picture similar to that of Heptarchy in England, immediately after Anglo-Saxons had established themselves in the country. A brief history of the facts regarding them will justify the remarks.

I. THE MISLS

The Misls which existed in Punjab, at the time of Ranjit Singh's accession to power, had been organized during the period of confusion and anarchy that prevailed from 1752 to 1761. And "It must be remembered that these Misls were not deliberately devised or knowingly adopted at one particular time, but were on the other hand, gradually evolved to most certain exigencies of the time"

"Any effective fighting machine must have a single controlling hand, whereas the Sikh doctrines of brotherhood and equality made every chief kick at the idea of subordination. It may be observed generally that where there is theoretical equality, the individual interprets that as meaning that he is as good as his neighbour, but his neighbour is not as good as he. So the chiefs had their followers, but every chief was reluctant to own a superior. Therefore, the members of the "Misls" were hard fighters very difficult to cope with individually, but at the same time very difficult to organize collectively."[12]

The Khalsa was not a Languid body. The existence of the common danger from beyond the North-West Frontiers, and internally from the disintegrating Mughal power, had kept them together. But

after the year 1783, not much was to be apprehended from the North-West, and within the Punjab, the Mughal power had already been thrown into the dust-bin of History.

Gurmata, or the General Central Assembly of the Misls was a "curious mixture of Theocracy Democracy and Absolutism.[13] Yet considered separately, it was none of them. It had already lived the purpose for which it had been organised. Belief in one God, was now not as much a binding force among the Sardars as in the troublous times it was. The community of faith weakened with the development of personal political ambitions among them. That political brotherhood which had brought them together, had now faded and attendance of the General Assembly became poorer. The religious inspiration having slackened, the only binding force among them now was the common lust for power, but this in turn, brought among them, mutual jealousies and a struggle for ascendancy, as for instance between Bhangis and the Kanheyas. The powerful Sardars wanted to establish their supermacy over the weak ones, which made the latter to seek alliances and protection of those in whom they had faith. But political faith is always a pail without its bottom. Moreover, the system of political alliances brought deeper division among the Sardars, and this coupled with the question of personal glory and power, made confusion worse confounded. Nor was the common man in different Misls, satisfied. After a long period of confusion and chaos, he now wanted protection and security and this could be given only by a strong unified monarchy in the Punjab.[14]

As early as in 1783, Froster had predicted that "we may see some ambitious chief led on by his genius and success, and absorbing the power of his associates, display from the ruins of the commonwealth, the standard of monarchy." Similar views had been expressed by Warran Hastinges in 1784. And this was correct. When Ranjit Singh acceded to power, the theocratic commonwealth of the Sikhs was in ruin and among the individual misls, none was strong enough to challenge Ranjit Sidgh's power. Nor was there any other power in Punjab which could be a source of any serious menace to Ranjit Singh. The circumstances in which he was born and acceded to power, were thus conducive to the development of his political ambition, as it will be further clarified in the short account that follows.

The Bhangi Misl

The most important misl on the North-West of the river Sutlej was Bhangi Misl. The Bhangi's took their name from their enslavement to bhang, an intoxicating preparation of hemp. The confederacy was founded by Chajja Singh. Their famous leader was Hari Singh, who with his brother Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh, making his headquarters in Amritsar, had overrun the neighbouring country and captured and held the city of Multan for several years.[15] At the time of Ranjit Singh's accession to power, the Bhangis still held the important cities of Lahore, Amritsar, Gujrat, and Sialkot. But the Bhangi leaders at this time, were no match to Ranjit Singh. Gulab Singh Bhangi, the most important of them was said to have been too romantic to challenge seriously the rising star. Sahib Singh, the second important leader, whose career had been hitherto marked by energy and enterprise, now became an indolent debauchee and drunkard. He quarrelled with the rival chiefs and Sardars, and, his power being weakend, Ranjit Singh could seize upon all his possessions. Nor were Lehna Singh and Gujar Singh of Lahore strong enough for the job. Invasions of Zaman Shah had weakened them. And tired of their tyranny and mismanagement, the leading citizens of Lahore themselves, according to one account, sent a petition to Ranjit Singh inviting him to come and occupy the city, promising him every help they could give.

The Ahluwalia Misl

Nor was the Ahluwalia Misl, though big enough and strong enough, a source of any serious menace to him. The Ahluwalia Misl had derived its name from the village Ahlu, five kos to the east of Lahore. Its founder was one Sadhu Singh, a Jat of the Kalal or distiller caste. But the true founder of the confederacy was Jassa Singh. "Fifth in the descent from Sadhu, who was born in 1718 ten years after the death of Guru Govind Singh." When the boy was five years old, Badr Singh, his father died and his widow mother is said to have taken the boy to Mai Sundri, "Widow of Guru Govind Singh...and the Mai blessed the little boy, and presented him with a silver mace, predicting that he would have mace-bearers to attend them." "The boy soon rose a distinction and was a man of great ability and a successful general

in the field. Though never acknowledged by the Sikhs generally as their king, yet was invariably entrusted with the command of the combined forces of the confederacies when a joint action against the enemy was contemplated." His influence among the Sikhs was great, in consequence chiefly of his saintly position and orthodoxy, and the greatest Sardars considered it an honour to be baptized by him. He did more than almost any chief to consolidate the Sikh power.

His possessions were chiefly in the tract of country between the rivers Sutlej and Beas.[16] But fortunately for Ranjit Singh, he also had died in 1783. He was succeeded by his second cousin, Bhag Singh. He, however quarrelled with Bhangis and Ramgharias. The Ramgarhia chief, Jassa Singh, allying himself with Sansar Chand Katoch of Kangra, had routed the Ahluwalia forces in 1801, under Hamir Singh. Bhag Singh's own march against the enemy also failed, as he fell ill during the march, and soon after died, leaving his only son, Feteh Singh to succeed him.

Under these circumstances, naturally therefore, when Fateh Singh succeeded to the chiefship of his Misl, he was anxious to form an offensive an defensive alliance with Ranjit Singh. The two young chiefs exchanged turbans, and swore perpetual friendship on the sacred Granth. Although this friendship was singed on the basis of equality, in practice, the diplomatic genius, Ranjit Singh, permitted him to play only a subservient part and used him rather as a stepping stone for the development of his power.

The Ramgarhia Misl

The Ramgarhia misl shared the city of Amritsar and the neighbouring districts with the Kanheyas. The Misl had been founded by Khoshal Singh, a Jat of Mauza Guga, in the vicinity of Amritsar. He was a follower of Banda Beragi, from whom he took pahul. After his death Nodh Singh succeeded and after Nodh Singh, Jassa Singh came to power. A very daring and intrepid young man, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, alongwith the Kanheyas, had plundered the Durani camps, ravaged the country far and wide to crush the Muslim power, established military posts and built forts when Khwaja Ubed, the Lahore Governor, had attacked the Sikh fort at Gujranwala. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia played an important part in the battle against the

enemy, and a large portion of guns, ammunition and treasures, fell to him, after the enemy had been routed. When driven by the Kanheyas across the river Sutlej, he ravaged the country up to Delhi and on one occassion he penetrated into the very heart of that city, carrying a way four guns from the Mughal quarter. He was paid a tribute by the governor of Meerut. Later, with Maha Singh's help, his trans Sutlej territories were restored to him, although there could be no lasting friendship between Ramgarhia and the Sukerchakias. Jasa Singh Ramgarhia was a brave and courageous leader, and he could be an effective hinderance in the way of Ranjit Singh. But here again, fortunately for Ranjit Singh, when he tried to expand his territory, Jasa Singh was an old man, too weak to challenge the Sukerchakia chief. Jasa Singh died in 1816, and was succeeded by his son Jodh Singh. But Jodh Singh was a man of no ambition and activity. His cousin, Dewan Singh, soon encroached upon his territories, and occupied an important part of them. Jodh Singh's son Hira Singh, also proved to be an incompoop, and his possessions were easily seized by Ranjit Singh.

The Kanheyas

The Kanheya Misl which was as important as the Bhangis had been, possessed large parts of the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. The Misl had been founded by Jai Singh, who came from the Mauza Kanha, 15 miles east of Lahore, from which the Misl got its name. Jai Singh had been a very powerful and influential chief and it was under his guardianship that Maha Singh, the father of Ranjit Singh had grown to power. 'Later, however Jai Singh became jealous of the growing wealth and influence of Maha Singh and fell out with him, but was defeated and the widow of his son Gurbux Singh, who had been killed in the battle, proposed the betrothal of her only daughter, Mehtab Kaur, to Ranjit Singh, and thus matrimonial relation between the two Misls was established. After the death of Jai Singh, Sada Kaur succeeded to the headship of her Misl. "She was a masterful, unscrupulous, and ambitious woman; but she possessed both courage and ability, and on several occasions proved herself a valuable ally to her youthful son-in-law. Her real aim was to render the whole of the Punjab subject to her own dominion; and she sought by keeping Ranjit

Singh under her control, to make his power subservient to her plans. But she mistook both the nature and the capabilities of his son-in-law. The Lion of the Punjab had no intention of becoming a stepping-stone for others, and Sada Kaur soon found that the role she had designed for him was the very one she was destined to play herself."[17]

To the rest of the Misls,only a passing reference may be made. Singhpuria Misl held portions of Ludhiana, Jullundur, Nurpur, and some northwestern part of the Ambala District. Once this confederacy was important and its founder Kapur Singh, played a very important part in the early political history of the Sikhs. He had captured from Faizulla Khan, the village and district of Faizullapur, near Amritsar, which was given by him the name of Singh Pura, after which the Misl itself began to be known as Singhpuria. When, however he died in 1753 he left no successor competent to bear his name and fame. Though his nephew Khushal Singh and his descendants kept possessions of the territory, they were unimportant and weak.

Nishanias, who get their name from Nishan or banner of the Khalsa, possessed Ambala, Liddran, Shahbad, Amloh, and some other territories. Jai Singh had been its most important chief and now it was a power of no importance.

Karor Singhias, getting their name from Karora Singh, held territories chiefly between the Mukanda and Jamuna rivers. It was also unimportant.

The Shahids were rather religious than military leaders. The founder of the Misl was one Sudda Singh, the Mahant of the Gurdwara at Talwandi, or Damdama, where Guru Govind Singh had made his resting place. "He was killed fighting against the Mohammedan governor of Jullundur and his head having been struck off he is reported to have ridden some distance and killed several of the enemy before he fell from his horse. Hence he was known as the marty (Shahid), and his followers took his name."[18] The Misl held some estates about Rania, Khari and Jaroli but was unimportant.

Nakkais held the Nakka country between Gogaira and Lahore. Dulewalia Misl was founded by Tara Singh of the village Dulewal, and possessed northern parts of Ludhiana and Ambala, some territory in Ferozepur and major portion of the upper Jullundur Doab. But these powers again, were small and could be easily dealt with.

The Phulkian Misl

The strongest power in the cis-Sutlej regions was the Phulkian Misl. The founder of the Misl was one Phul, a Jat of Sindhu tribe, "thirtieth in descent from Jesal, the founder of the family, and the state and city of Jesalmir, in Rajputana." Phul founded a village at a distance of five miles from Mauza Bedowali or Mehraj, and named it Phul after his own name. Guru Her Govind had prophesied that Phul would some day become a great man. And this proved to be correct. "Phul had seven sons who became ancestors of the reigning families of Patiala, Jind and Nabha, called after his name the Phulkians. The houses of Bhador, Malod, Landgarhia, and the family of Jiandau, sprang from his issue, and attained to great wealth and power."[19] At the time of Ranjit Singh's succession to power, however the Phulkian chiefs had been considerably weakend by their mutual jealousies and warfare. Sahib Singh, the ruler of the Patiala house, was the most powerful among them, but he was an unambitious many and an inefficient ruler. Nor did he have a peace in his domestic life. He had a quarrel with his own queen, Aus Kaur, which rather led the latter to invite Ranjit Singh to decide their domestic quarrel.

II. THE MUSLIM CHIEFS

Besides the Sikh Misls there were some territorial units in the Punjab, which were in the hands of the Muslim chiefs. Multan was being governed by Sadozai chief, Muzaffar Khan, whose father, Shuja Khan, claimed a common descent with Ahamed Shah Abdali. His ancestors had come from Kandhar, and in the confusion which followed the accession of Nadir Shah to the Kabul throne, they occupied Multan.

Twenty-five kos south-east of Lahore, Kasur, the pathan stronghold was governed by Nizamuddin, an ambitious Muslim chief. Dera Ghazi Khan, including Bhawalpur, was ruled by Bhawal Khan Daudpotra. Jhang was under the control of Ahmed Khan Sial. Peshawar was in the hands of Fateh Khan, Barakzai, who acknowledged the nominal suzereinty of Mahmud Shah, and Kashmir was in the hands of his brother Azim Khan. The fort of Attok was in the hands of Jehandad Khan, the chief of Wazir Khels. Other

independent chiefs were those of Dhani, Khushab, Wazirabad and Pakpattan. Pakpattan was the seat of the shrine of Baba Farid, in whose honour it is said:

"As long as the earth and the world endure, so long may the country of Pakpattan flourish. For in its environs, which resemble paradise, rests the Saint Sheikh Baba Farid."[20]

Bannu, Kohat, Sialkot, Dera Ismail Khan and Chiniot were also held by the Muslims. Tank was in the hands to Sarwer Khan Kutti Khel. All these powers were hostile powers. But on the whole, among them as well, none was formidable enough to be a source of any danger to Ranjit Singh.

III. THE HILLS

The plains thus presented to Ranjit Singh, a "gradual and easy means by which the whole might be enveloped within his supremacy." But in the hill regions the things were different. There were many petty chiefs in these regions, who had their own ambitions to expand. The more important of them were the chiefs of Suket, Mandi, Kulu, Basoli, Chamba, Nurpur, Jammu and Kangra. The chief of Kangra, Sansar Chand Kutoch, among them, was the most ambitious man, and he was developing his sway over the rest of them. This could be a possibly source of menace to Ranjit Singh, but here too fortunately for him, the things turned out to be rather in his favour.

By developing his hold over the petty chiefs of hill, Sansar Chand made things rather easier for Ranjit Singh. For now if Ranjit Singh wanted to occupy hill regions, he could do so by settling his affairs with Sansar Chand alone. There was no necessity of fighting all the petty chiefs separately and thus wasting time and energy.

IV. GURKHAS

The Gurkhas in Nepal, however could raise complications for Ranjit Singh. They conquerred Kumaon, invaded Sikkim and were threatening Tibet. When defeated by China in 1792, they began their westward advance annexing Garhwal and Kumaon in 1794, and soon their kingdom stretched from Sikkim to the borders of Kashmir, including within it of course Kumaon and the Simla Hill States. Bhim Sen Thapa

who became Prime Minister of the country early in the 19th century, was a man of very high ambitions. He was not satisfied with the territories that he already had with in his state, and it was not after a long time of his succession when he began to aspire for expansion further West. A collision between Nepal and the young state of Ranjit Singh was, therefore imminent. But here too, although the situation was more complicated it was not difficult for him to meet it.

V. THE ENGLISH

The English by this time had fought their fateful battle of Plassy and established their full sway on Bengal. Their influence was developing on the adjoining states such as Bihar, Agra and Oudh, and they had already exterminated from active Indian politics the formidable power of France. Yet when Lord Wollesley came in India in 1798, the first problem that he had to face, was the rising power of Marathas. Nizam too was no more friendly towards them. They had yet to occupy Delhi, if they wanted to establish their empire in India and proceed towards Punjab and more, the Sikh States of Malwa had to be conquerred if the English wanted to touch the eastern frontiers of Ranjit Singh's State. Ranjit Singh, therefore had no immediate challenge from the English to face.

VI. THE MARATHAS

Nor did Ranjit Singh have to meet any challenge from the Marathas. Although by the year 1798, they had hung resources and were controlling practically the whole of Central India, although in 1797, Daulat Rao Sindhia was in the occupation Delhi and some Maratha chiefs like Dhara Rao had attacked some of the Sikh States of Malwa several times; yet, whatever their ambitions previously might have been, in 1799 they had no ambition to occupy the Punjab.

VII. THE AFGHANS

Another possible challenge that Ranjit Singh could have to meet was from Afghanistan. In 1752 once at least Ahmad Shah Abdali had annexed Punjab to his Afghan Raj, but Sikhs had forced him to leave. His son Timur tried to re-occupy the country, but failed. In 1783, Shah Zaman came to power in Afghanistan and by 1795 he had

invaded Punjab twice and occupied the territories up to Hassan Abdal He led his third invasion in 1797, occupied Lahore and appointed Ahmad Khan Shahanchi as its governor, though soon to be pushed aside. In 1798, Shah Zaman led his 4th invasion in Punjab, but fortunately for Ranjit Singh, he had to leave the things in a lurch and hurry back to his country, to suppress the rebellion of his half brother Mahmud Zaman. In haste he lost some of his guns in the rising river Jhelum, which it is said, were dug out for him by Ranjit Singh who in return was granted the legal control of Lahore. The story that Lahore was legally granted to Ranjit Singh may be doubted, but it is sure that at about this time, Ranjit Singh did have a friendly relations with the Afghan Ruler.[21]

There were some small but powerful tribes, between Jhelum and Indus there were many individual Zamindars or warlike clans organised on feudal basis, such as Gakhars of Jhelum, Maliks of Shahpur and Baluchis of Sahiwal. But the total number of their armed retenues, which could be doubled in time of emergency, was not more than 3,000 men.

The Punjab was thus a congeries of small states and other warring groups open to the adventures of anambitious man, when Ranjit Singh came to power. He was lucky. His environment shaped his handiwork, "the country—on the line of invasion, the people—a race nurtured in storm.'[22]

REFERENCES

1. See M' Gregor, 'History of the Sikhs', i,p. 164; Lepel Griffin, 'Ranjit Singh', p. 125; Payne, 'A short History of the Sikhs, p. 71; Kanheya Lal, 'Tarikh-i-Punjab' , p. 126; Latif, 'History of the Punjab', p. 341; Von Carls, 'Travel in India, Sindh and the Punjab', i, p. 164. Besides the same date is mentioned by Munshi Shahmat Ali and Giani Gian Singh. the most reliable proof may be the inscription found outside a room in the Haveli of Maha Singh at Gujranwala, the place where Ranjit Singh is said to have been born. The inscription reads, 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh Born 2nd, November 1780. Jai Viladat Ranjit Singh Sahib Bahadur. Tarikh Viladat 2 November, 1780."
2. M' Gregor, i. pp. 152-53.
3. See Payne, p. 70; Latif, p. 344.
4. Payne, 71.

5. Wade's letter, 31st May, 1931.
6. Gordon, 'The Sikhs', p. 83.
7. Griffin, pp. 89-90.
8. See Chopra, G.L., 'Punjab as Sovereign State', p. 11; Latif, p. 348; Sir Lepel Griffin seems to be wrong that Ranjit Singh at this time was riding an Elephant. See his The Punjab Chiefs.
9. Latif, p. 348.
10. See M' Gregor, i, p. 153; Latif, pp. 346-7.
11. 'Ranjit Singh', pp. 8-9.
12. Gupta, H.R.
13. Sir Charles Gough, 'The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars'. p. 28.
14. See Griffin, pp. 83-85.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
16. Griffin 78-79;
    Latif, 313-316.
17. Payne, pp. 72-73.
18. Griffin, pp. 82-83.
19. Latif, p. 325.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
21. See *Infra*, pp. 31-33.
22. Sinha, Ranjit Singh, p. 2.

4

Emergence of Ranjit Singh

I

After establishing himself firmly in Lahore, Ranjit Singh began consolidating his dominions and making suitable administrative arrangements to secure and strengthen his authority. They chiefs around the region began to feel envious to see the young Maharaja gaining unchallenged power with the conquest of the premier city of the Punjab. They began to devise various kinds of plans to defeat the Sukerchakia chief and wrest from him the most conveted city of Lahore. To achieve this object, the prominent chiefs like Jassa Singh Ramagrahia, Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar, Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad and Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur formed a strong coalition to counteract the aims of Ranjit Singh. The confederate armed forces which were several thousands in their strength, marched from Amritsar to Lahore under the command of their respective chiefs. At this, Ranjit Singh, who was actively supported by his mother-in-law, Rani Sada Kaur, collected a huge force to checkmate the further advance of the army of these chiefs. As a measure of precaution and safety, he marched out of Lahore with a huge and well-equipped force and encamped near Mouza Bhasin, hardly 16 kms away from his capital. A few skirmishes during the period of two months did not decide the issue. The sudden death of a powerful confederate, Gulab Singh of Bhangi *misl* on account of hard drinking was the cause of the break up of the confederacy. Thus greatly weakened by the lack of resources, it led to the final retreat of the combined forces. This factor afforded a clear opportunity to Ranjit Singh to declare himself the sole ruler of Lahore.[1]

Ranjit Singh celebrated his victory in 1801 by formally declaring himself the Maharaja in a public *durbar* held on the occasion. It was declared that in all future communications, with other chiefs of the Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh should be styled as *Sarkar.* This was decided to signify power and authority of his state. The *durbar* was attended by many Punjab chiefs, *Sardars, Chaudhris, Lambardars* and other dignitaries who owed their submission and allegiance to Ranjit Singh. 'When all had assembled, the family *purohit* or priest applied the *tilak* to the Maharaja's forehead, as a token of his investiture with the sovereignty, and henceforward Ranjit Singh assumed the power and functions of the sovereign of a nation and the title of Maharaja. The *Ulemas,* the learned men of the town and poets recited poems in honour of the occasion; and the whole of the festivities in connection with this great historical event were celebrated with the greatest pomp and splendour. An order was issued for the establishment of a mint at Lahore, and a coin was struck in the name of the Maharaja, being the following inscription in Persian meaning thereby, "hospitality, the sword Victory and conquest unfailing to Guru Gobind Singh from Guru Nanak." On the reverse was inscribed the era and place of coining. The ceremonies connected with the opening of the mint were gone through the same day, and the new rupees which were struck and presented on the following day, for the Maharaja's inspection, were given away in alms to the poor."

'The grandees of the sister-Bhangi-Misl hungered for the opportunity. They, consequently, were not pleased that this plum had fallen into Sukarchakian's lap...Their arm lacked the strength to wrest it from the boy. With his grip established over Lahore, Ranjit Singh's career as a king began'. Under these circumstances, the neighbouring chiefs had begun realizing the superior power, strength and resources of the young Maharaja and felt the reality of facing the new emerging danger to their regions not in the distant future.

The occupation of strategically—situated city of Lahore greatly enhanced the prestige of Ranjit Singh and strengthened his position as a rising Sikh ruler in the region flanking river Ravi. It created awe and fear in the minds of the other chiefs of the *misls.* Consequently, the Maharaja gained confidence and lost no opportunity in drilling his army for more territorial expansion. He executed his military skill

and strategy like a superb general and with his far-sightedness, diplomatic manoeuvres, and shrewdness, he achieved success unparalleled in the annals of India.

In the closing years of the eighteenth century, cost of the areas in Punjab, controlled by some *misls,* and other chiefs, were in chaotic condition. They were envious of one another's position and did not see eye to eye in matters where their self-interest was involved. They did not recongnise any chief as their leader and thus were badly disunited. Such a state of affairs had greatly weakened their position and it was not difficult for a powerful and ambitious ruler like Ranjit Singh to deal with them at various levels one by one.

'The political situation of the Punjab about this time may be briefly described thus. Kasur, a considerable town, 25 *kos* southeast of Lahore peopled chiefly by Pathan emigrants, was ruled by Nizam-ud-din Khan, a powerful Mohammedan chief, Chak-Guru, now known as Amritsar, was in the hands of the Bhangis, under Golab Singh. Multan was governed by Muzaffar Khan Saddozai, son of Shuja, Khan who claimed common descent with the Abdali king, Ahmad Shah, and whose ancestors, coming from Kandahar, occupied Multan in the disturbances following the accession of Nadir Shah to the Kabul throne. Daera was occupied by Abdul Samad Khan; Mankera, Hot, Bannu and the neighbouring country by Mohammed Shahnawaz Khan Moin ud-doula, the successor of Nawab Mahomad Khan and Tank by Sarwar Khan Katti Khel. These were all-Afghan usurpers who, originally governors of the Kabul Government of the Punjab, had become independent rulers of the contours under their charge, owing to the enfeebled state of the Durrani Government. Dera Ghazi Khan, including Bahawalpur, and a tract of country adjoing Multan, was ruled the Daudpotra, Bahawal Khan; Jhang by the Sial, Ahmad Khan; Peshawar by Fatteh Khan, Barakzai, the nominal vassal of Mahmud Shah, and Kashmir by his brother, Azim Khan. The fort of Attock was in possession of the Wazir Khels under Jahanded Khan; the Kangra hills were under Raja Sansar Chand; Chamba was under Raja Charat Singh Ahluwalia, afterwards the turban-brother of Ranjit Singh. The territories, Trans and Cis-Sutlej, were governed by independent Sikh Sardars, and their confederacies called *misls,* and other independent chiefs, and so were Wazirabad, Dhanni, Khoshab and Pakpattan, the seat of the great shrine of Bawa Farid...'[3]

Greatly encouraged by the conquest of some areas of the Bhangis, Ranjit Singh diverted his military resources against Amritsar; an important town under the same *misl*. In this adventure, he was assisted by Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia.[4] He was also helped by the troops of the chiefs of Kanheya and Nakai *misls*. After a few days of the siege by a strong combination of these forces, the Bhangi Sardars surrendered. The fort was captured by the allied forces. Ranjit Singh captured considerable material of war, including the famous *zam-zama* and several other items of ammunition. The new territory thus brought under the control of the Lahore *durbar* proved a source of handsome revenue for the Sikh ruler. It also added to the commercial and religious importance of the conqueror's prestige. Besides, it removed an adversary from his path and facilitated his advance towards other areas in the *Doab*.

The Sikh chief soon after marched into the Jullundur Doab, plundering and making annexations as he went along. During this march, he heard that the rich widow of Chuhar Mal who was in possession of the town of Phagwara, aspired for independence. He marched into the town, seized Phagwara and compelled the widow to retire to Hardwar. All her property was confiscated and given to Sardar Fateh Singh.

During this time, Ranjit Singh received news about the military activities, of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra into the plains of Jullundur, where he had taken possession of Bijwara and Hoshiarpur. The Maharaja at once took action against the advancement of Raja Sansar Chand, expelled him from this region and established his military posts, 'Sansar Chand fled to Kangra, Ranjit Singh seized many villages below the hills, and, in a long tour which he made, exacted tribute or extorted presents in money, from old Sikh chiefs and Sardars, among them being Tara Singh Gheba, Dharma Singh of Amritsar and Budh Singh of Fyzullapur.'

In a couple of months, he captured Mirowal and Narowal: Their chiefs presented him with a tribute of Rs. 8,000. Thereafter, he subdued the chiefs of Jammu,[5] Sialkot, Wazirabad, Jassarwal and Dilawargarh. These conquests and agreements of submission greatly enhanced the prestige of the Lahore chief in Trans-Sutlej region of the Punjab.

In 1803, Ranjit Singh also diverted his attention towards Multan for the first time. Its ruler, Muzaffar Khan realised his weak position and met the Sikh chief at a distance of thirty miles from the town and offered presents to him. Thereafter, the Lahore chief advanced towards Jhang, Sahiwal and other territories under the control of the Kabul monarchy. The ruler of Jhang, Ahmad Khan, offered a stiff resistance, but was defeated. He consented to pay an annual *nazzrana* to the sovereign of Lahore.

Kasur was another target for the Lahore chief. The successive attempts were made by the Maharaja in 1800, 1801 and 1802 and he was able to exact a heavy tribute from its ruler, Kutub-ud-Din Khan. In 1807, he finally unnexed the territory after a brief campaign in which the Kasur chief proved himself a poor match against the superior resources of the Lahore chief who was supported by the well-trained army of Sardar Jodh Singh Ramgarhia. The former was also compelled to submit to the terms proposed to him. He acknowledged himself a feudatory of the Lahore chief and also sent his brother, Kutub-ud-Din Khan to pay his respects to the Maharaja. The chief of Kasur further bound himself to furnish a quota of troops under his brother and to follow the Maharaja of Lahore. Besides, as security for carrying out these stipulations, two Pathan chiefs, Haji Khan and Wasal Khan were sent to Lahore as hostages.

The crushing defeat of Pathan chief of Kasur may be attributed to his weak military resources and lack of unified action in the battle compared to the far superior and well-trained officers and soldiers of the Lahore chief. 'Want of unity weakened the resistance of the then chief, Kutub-ud-din, and at the end of a month, he surrendered at discretion, and received a tract of land on the opposite side of the Sutlej for his maintenance.'[6]

With this conquest, a Pathan 'colony' was eliminated between the most fertile region, *viz.*, Lahore and Ferozepur. Besides, a sizable territorial gain which was undoubtedly a very fertile tract of land, almost on the banks of river Sutlej, this conquest greatly enhanced the prestige of the newlyemerged Sikh ruler in this part of the Punjab. Strategically, it afforded an easy access to his further advance and conquest in the region across the river.

Besides, the formidable Gurkha leader of Nepal, Amar Singh Thapa, was drilling his armed forces and had captured Garhwal and Kumaon in 1794. He was seriously thinking of bringing a major portion of the Punjab under his administrative control. Obviously, the Sikh chief of Lahore was bound to match his arms, one day, against the expansionist designs of the Nepalese leader.

The region between Sutlej and Jamuna was under Sikh *misls*—the Nishanwalas, the Nihangs, the Karorsinghias and the Phulkian.[7] Besides, there exists a few petty states, like Ladwa, Buria and Thanesar. Malerkotla and Kunjpura were under Muslim rulers.

Amongst the powerful and well-established Sikh chiefs, in the southern and eastern regions of river Sutlej, Sardar Sahib Singh, the Phulkian chief of Patiala was the foremost. But he was not so ambitious as to think of crossing the Sutlej and making a bid for the possessions of other Sikh chiefs. This indeed was an added advantage to the aggressive designs of Ranjit Singh in the first decade nineteenth century when he commenced a programme of speedy expansion of his small kingdom.

'The history of the Southern or Malwa Sikhs need to be continued although it presents many points of interest to the general reader, as well as to the student and to those concerned in the administration of India. The British functionaries soon became involved in intricate questions about interference between equal chiefs, and between chiefs and their confederates or dependents; they laboured to reconcile the Hindu laws of inheritance with the varied customs of different races, and with the alleged family usages of peasants suddenly became princes. They had to decide on questions of escheat, and being strongly impressed with the superiority of British municipal rule, and with the undoubted claim of the paramount to some benefit in return for the protection it afforded. They strove to prove that collateral heirs had a limited right only, and that exemption from tribute necessarily implied an enlarged liability to confiscation. They had to define the common boundary of the Sikh states and of British rule, and they were to show., after the manner of Ranjit Singh, that the present possession of a principal town gave a right to all villages which had ever been attached to it as the seat of a local authority, and that all waste land

belonged to the supreme power, although the dependent might have last possessed them in sovereignty and intermediately brought them under the plough. They had to exercise a paramount municipal control, and in the surrender of criminals, and in the demand for compensation for property stolen from British subjects, the original arbitrary nature of the decisions enforced has not yet been entirely replaced by rulers of reciprocity. But the government of a large empire well always be open to obloquy, and liable to misconception, from the acts of officious and ill-judging servants, who think that they best serve the complicated interest of their rulers by lessening the material power of others, and that any advantage they may seem to have gained for the state, they obey, will surely promote their own objects. Nor, in such matter, are servants alone to blame and the whole system of internal government in India requires to be remodelled and made the subject of a legislation at once wise, considerate and comprehensive.'[8]

Patiala, the most powerful of all states, after the death of its strong man Sardar Amar Singh was ruled by Sardar Sahib Singh, "whose weakness approached imbecility and whose territory though large was completely anarchical." Sardar Bhag Singh of Jind, a maternal uncle of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was considered as the 'wise man of the country.' He was a 'shrewd and calculating opportunist', foremost in every political transaction and a confirmed mediator in the affairs of Majha and Malwa. Griffin calls him a fairly reliable man, though a 'jolly liver and a hard drinker'. Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha was by far the most sober and intelligent of all the Phulkian rulers, "the nearest approach to the civilized among the whole set of rude barons." Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal was a 'cunning fox, unfathomable and slippery like an ecl.' Like Bhag Singh, he always kept his interests in the forefront, but unlike him, his shifting loyalties were always transparent. The Pathan states of Malerkotla and Kunjpura were torn with internal strife; the former was ruled by Ataullah Khan on whom Ranjit Singh had levied a heavy contribution, for the payment of a portion of which the chiefs of Pataila, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal had stood sureties by establishing police and revenue posts within the Pathan chief's territory. Kunjpura was in a confused state because of a succession fued.

During the Anglo-Maratha struggle for supremacy of power in North India in the opening years of the nineteenth century, the Sikh chiefs including Maharaja Ranjit Singh remained aloof. With the crushing defeat of Perron, his ambition to establish the supremacy of Marathas in the north of India, including a few areas in the Punjab, was thoroughly shattered. The Marathas suffered defeat after defeat—in Delhi region and at Laswari—on 1 November 1803 and the Treaty of Surji Arjan Gaon sealed their fate in this region. As a consequence of these military reverses, the Marathas were forced to cede Delhi, Agra, Rohtak, Hissar and Gurgaon.

'Except for the acknowledgment of a vague sort of paramountcy exercised over the Sikh chiefs by means of heavy exactions, the Maratha influence in the Cis-Sutlej region was of little political significance. It was also a short duration. The Sardars watched the development of events in Northern Indian with apparent nervousness and sensed the impending disaster for the Marathas, Sahib Singh of Patiala was already in correspondence with Collins (June 1802) paving the way for a friendly alliance with the British. Other Phulkian chiefs had kept themselves assidiously aloof and watched with unconcealed satisfaction, the overthrow of Perron, their former benefactor and the dispersal of Bourquin's armies. Ranjit Singh was busy subjugating Chinnot (1802), Pindi Bhattian, Jhang and Sahiwal (1803). He does not appear to have grasped the significance of the end of Maratha dominance in North India.'[9]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's depredatioes were not confined to the Trans-Sutlej area only. He raised his cavalry, drilled and trained it properly to subdue the chiefs across river Sutlej. On 18 December 1808, he collocated a huge army and crossed the Sutlej in order to take possession of Ludhiana, an important town in the Cis-Sutlej region. 'Sahib Singh was getting nervous at his approach. He sent frantic appeals secretly to the Resident (at Delhi) for assistance, for he was afraid of an open rupture with the Maharaja. On 14 December, the Patiala news-writer confirmed the Raja's alarm and informed the Resident at Delhi that it was the intention of Ranjit Singh to take possession of Sahib Singh and was sending a *vakil* to obtain the aid of the British Government. The British took no notice of these supplications, for Sahib Singh was considered 'very weak in judgment

if not mad,' and the Government did not want to quarrel with Ranjit Singh on this account.'

For sometime, David Ochterlony was the British Resident at Delhi and he often expressed a sense of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in absence of any definite order from Calcutta. He always gave the plea that Sikh chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej area who remained defiant in their attitude at the time of Anglo-Maratha hostilities, should be punished. On 7 December 1804, he even proposed that the British government should adopt the policy of subjugation in the name of the Mughal Empiror and thus take charge of the whole region between Jamuna and Sutlej.

'His second proposition was not only chimerical but also stupid. It consisted of the assignment of the country in question to the four Sikh chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal, whom he considered as possessing a paramount influence in the region, and subjecting the whole body of the Sikhs to a tribute formerly exacted from them by the Marathas.'

The British policy of 'cautious neutrality' adopted by the East India Company's government under the Governor-Generalship of Lord Minto who assumed charge of his office in 1807, afforded an excellent opportunity to the young Maharaja to carve out new areas in the Cis-Sutlej region. He received an invitation by Raja Bhag Singh of Jind to assist Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha, his friend and ally, against Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala for the recovery of a small village, Doladhi, situated at a distance of one-and-a-half mile from Nabha. Ranjit Singh considered this invitation both an opportunity and honour because it would afford him the best chance to demonstrate his superior military resources and greatly help in establishing his influence in Majha and Malwa. With these considerations in view, he collected a huge force of 30,000 men and crossed the Sutlef at Ludhiana and also plundered Nakodar. Assisted by two prominent Sardars of the region, Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Sardar Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Ranjit Singh's advance was greatly facilitated. The task promised was undertaken without any opposition, *viz.*, he restored Doladhi to the Raja of Nabha and also exacted a heavy tribute from Sardar Sahib Singh. Besides, the Rajas of Nabha and Jind offered the Lahore chief the *nazrana.* While retreating from this successful

expedition, Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Jagraon, Dakha and Ghungrana. Besides, the Muhammedan ruling family was practically wiped out. These territories were distributed amongst Sardars who followed the Maharaja as well as accepted his suzerainty.

'Ranjit Singh's irruption into the Cis-Sutlej territories, however was viewed with apparent complacency by the British, who considered the Sikhs disunited and involved in internecine strife. Though it was realised that Ranjit Singh had acquired considerable ascendancy over the Sikhs, yet British relations with him were of a feeble nature. The Patiala-Nabha quarrel appeared to be a local contest. Further, the Jind and Nabha rulers had assured the Resident at Delhi that Ranjit Singh had been invited by them to settle the affair. His transaction, therefore did not alarm the British. The Resident was, however kept fully informed of his movements in the Cis-Sutlej area by the Jind Raja and the British military commanders at Karnal, Rewari and Saharanpur. It was reported that the Lahore ruler was ambitious and desirous of acquiring territory across the Sutlej, but the line which he might ultimately adopt, depended upon the petty Sikh chiefs. The Patiala ruler, hard pressed to resist him, might apply to the British for mediation or military aid, which in Seton's opinion should not be granted. But on 4 November, alarming reports poured in: that the Maharaja was moving towards the Ganges under the pretence of performing ablution in that river, and that his real intention was to plunder such of the British possessions as were most exposed. The Buria chief, Bhagwan Singh, urged the Resident to take measures for protecting the upper part of the Doab. Bhagwan Singh was told that the British Government had no differences with Ranjit Singh, and that so far as he was concerned, it had no apprehensions of any hostile intention on his part.'[10]

In the year 1807, the Lahore chief once again crossed the river Sutlej at the invitation of Rani Aus Kaur of Patiala for 'intercession on behalf of her infant son with the Raja.' He successfully solved the dispute and collected the promised reward from Rani. On the eve of his retreat, the Maharaja attacked Naraingarh and seized the territories of the Dallewala chief in the *Doab*. Thus, an area with an annual revenue of Rs. 400,518, comprising the places like Ludhiana, Sirhind, Ghungrana, and Boorea wee taken possession of by the young Sikh chief.

Ranjit Singh's successful incursions in the Cis-Sutlej region greatly alarmed the Phulkian chiefs who felt nervous at the exaction of *nazrana* and tribute from them. They had the feeling that if this state of affairs lingered on, their independence, nay, their very existence as rulers might be difficult, doubtful, and risky. They, therefore, stored out an honourable option for them and it was to approach the British Resident for assistance against the incursions of the Lahore chief.

The delegation of the worried and oppressed chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej states which approached the British Resident at Delhi on 15 March 1808, consisted of Sardar Bhag Singh of Jind, Sardar Lal Singh of Kaithal, Sardar Chen Singh, the Dewan of Patiala state and the chiefs of Jagadhari and Radhour. They represented their fear, helplessness, dissatisfaction and uneasiness at the continuous onslaughts of the Lahore chief on their territories and sought British help and protection for them against the superior resources of the young Sikh chief who had made a well-thought out plan for subjugating the Cis-Sutlej region and bringing all its chiefs and Sardars under his suzerainty.

The British Resident at Delhi apprised N.B. Edmonstone, Secretary to the Government in the Political Department, of the whole situation thus on 7 March 1808.[11]

'On the 4th instant I had the honour to address you on the subject of the advantage which in my humble opinion might be derived from inducing Sardar Ranjit Singh of Lahore to agree to consider the Sikh chieftains whose territories are situated to the southward of the Sutlej as independent of his authority and neither subject to his interference to that of the British Government.

'The expediency of conducting an arrangement of this nature, has frequently occurred to me. But, the submitting my sense of that expediency to the consideration of government was, as already stated, suggested by my having learned from good authority that Ranjit Singh had on contemplation to put a specific question to me through the medium of his *vakeels* as to the boundary line of the British provinces to the North-Westward, which reference in the event of its being actually made, would, I thought, prevent a favourable opportunity for, at least, sounding Ranjit Singh on the subject provided the reasoning

upon which the suggestion is founded with the approbation of government.

'Since the dispatch of that letter, a circumstance had occurred which tend to confirm me in the belief that my information relative to Ranjit Singh's intention was well-founded.'

'I yesterday, received a joint request from the *vakeels* of Rajah Sahib Singh of Putteealah, Rajah Bhag Singh of Jind and Bhye Laul Singh of Kheythal requesting a private conference with me on a matter of much importance. With this request I, of course, complied by receiving the hint of the *vakeels* without delay. The conversation commenced with their expressing the uneasiness with their masters felt at the growing power, the restless ambition and the unsettled character and habits of Ranjit Singh, which they observed, endangered the independence of all his neighbours, adding, however that the anxiety of the Sikh chieftains whom they represented, as well as of the others who were connected with them was considerably diminished by the vicinity of the territories of the British Government which in case of necessity, would, they trusted, exert its power to protect them, in conformity to the promise of Lord Lake. They then produced the 'promise' upon which this hope was founded and it proved to be a mere assurance from His Lordship endorsed upon letter from Rajah Bhag Singh declaring that the British Government would not deprive them of any of their lands. This led me to observe that there was great and obvious difference between a power agreeing not to attack and its binding itself guarantee that Lord Lake's assurance, conformable to the moderate and aggressive system of the British Government; merely declared the former but did not stipulatte the latter after some conversation. The *vakeels* admitted the distinction but observed that if it ever strictly adhered to, they would be overwhelmed by the power of Ranjit Singh. They then adverted to his supposed intention to direct his *vakeels* to ascertain the sentiments of the British Government as to the Northwestern boundary line of its dominions and expressed a hope that, in conformity to what they termed the spirit of Lord Lake's assurance, their masters and the other Sikh chieftains, whose territories were situated to the southward of the Sutlej, would not be abandoned to the power of Ranjit Singh. I observed to them in reply that in all probability their fears led them to ascribe to that chieftain's intentions

which he never entertained. To this they answered that their conclusions were drawn from his general conduct and from what actually took place during his two late expeditions to Putteealah, and that all the Sikh chieftains on this side of the Sutlej, were under the greatest apprehensions and anxiously hoped, they might under any circumstances, consider themselves as under the protection of the British Government. In further explanation of the object of their visit, they added that they might virtually be considered as representing all the Sikh chieftains on this side of the Sutlej, *viz.,*

Sahib Singh of Putteealah
Bhag Singh of Jind
Bhye Laul Singh of Kheythal
Jaswant Singh of Nabha
Goordit Singh of Ladooah
Jodh Singh of chichroolee (near Boorea)
and Karam Singh of Shahabad.

All of whom were alarmed at the ambitions projects which Ranjit Singh a appeared to entertain.

'In my reply, I, of course forbore giving them any hopes of their desire being acceded to, but contened myself, with observing generally that supposing Ranjit Singh to put the question which they supposed him to have in contemplation a proper reply would be given on the part of the British Government.'

'I have deemed it my duty to enter into these details because they tend to show the light in which Ranjit Singh's past conduct and future intentions are viewed by the petty chieftains of his own persuasion. Previously to concluding, it may not be irrelevant to the subject to observe that the intercourse between Ranjit Singh and Jaswant Rao Holkar appears to have of late, become greater than heretofore, and that Holkar in paying to Ranjit Singh's *vakeels*, as he lately did, the compliment of a visit seems to have evinced an increased desire to concillate the mind of the Sikh chieftain'.

N.B. Edmonstone duly acknowledged, Seton's communications and appreciated the efforts he had put in the maintaining and establishing British government's relationship with the chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej region. He wrote to him on 21 March 1808.

'I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your three dispatches of the 28th. Ultimo, 4th and 7th instant on the subject of Rajah Ranjit Singh's intended visit to Hardwar and his supposed views with respect to the Sikh chiefs whose territories are situated between the Sutlej and the Jamuna and desiring the instructions of Government with regard to the reply to be given to the expected enquiries on the part of Ranjit Singh respecting the limit of the country to the Northward to which the British Government will be disposed to extend its protection.

'Although circumstances might certainly arise of a nature to render it highly expedient so far take from the general principle of policy observed by the British Government in India as to guarantee the country of the Sikhs to the Southward of the Sutlej against the effects of Ranjit Singh's ambition, yet Government would under any circumstances desire to avoid a previous pledge to that effect and to retain the liberty of acting according to the exigency of events and transactions. It is peculiarly desirable at the present moment to withhold any declaration which can be considered to indicate on the part of the British found a resolution either to approve or to permit the execution of Ranjit Singh's imputed projects, of conquests or exactions.

'The Governor-General-in-Council does not admit the right of any state to demand from the British Government an explanation of its views and intention accepting only in those obvious cases which are described by the general principle of public law nor consequently an obligation to answer either negatively or affirmatively, the enquiry which Rajah Ranjit Singh is reported to make through the agency of his *vakeels.* The Governor-General in-Council is, therefore, of opinion that in reply to that enquiry as well as to the solicitations of the other Sikh chiefs, it will not be desirable to say more than that the conduct of the British Government, will be regulated according to the circumstances of the occasion.'

'The considerations on which you have founded the suggestion contained in the 7th paragraph of your dispatch of the 7th instant, are considered by the Governor-General-in-Council to possess much weight, but the policy of adopting that suggestion must in a great degree depend on the issue of events which yet remain to be developed by the lapse of time. For the Governor-General-in-Council

entertains some doubt of the solidity of the argument stated in the 10th paragraph of your dispatch last mentioned as connected with the sentiments of Ranjit Singh who although he may be disposed to admit the reason, moderation and justice of a proposal which gets bound to the progress of the British power as well as to the extension of his own, must be aware that this government sacrifices by that proposal, on meditated views of conquest or of profit whilst it restrains his plans of aggrandizement and consequently creates an opposition of interest between the British Government and him. And although as you have justly observed if Rajah Ranjit Singh objected to the proposal as interfering with his plans of conquest, he might be considered as justifying our adoption of the measure upon the principles of self-defence; yet the result must be the same since that defence would then be directly opposed to the declared projects of Ranjit Singh. Unit it is known therefore in what degree the interests and severity of the British Government may require a cordial union of its interests with those of Ranjit Singh, it is not easy to determine what sacrifices it may be expedient to make for the attainment of that object? I am directed, however to remark that the exigency of those eventual circumstances which may render necessary to our interests, the goodwill and cooperation of Ranjit Singh may be expected to withhold him from the prosecution of any plans of conquest and will at least afford a strong ground of argument on which to urge the necessity of his suspending them'.

'I am directed to signify to you the Governor-General-in-Council's approbation of concurrence in Ranjit Singh's desire to visit Hardwar and of your endeavour to induce him to limit the number of his armed followers to two thousand.'

'Ranjit made a yearly conquest, billeted his army on it for a time, then handed it over, for a sum of money, to one of his lieutenants. Most of his successes were bloodless; his prestige and his army carried all before them. When there was a prospect of resistance, he temporised until his opportunity was ripe. Like Louis XIV, he found sieges more congenial than battles.'[12]

'As Ranjit Singh's plans developed he exhibited the same cosmopolitanism in the officering of his regular forces. White or brown, Hindu or Muslim, Teuton or Latin, all were employed,

provided that they knew their trade.[13] Ranjit Singh was accustomed to issue instructions to his officers in such details that little or no initiative was left to them.'

'Ranjit Singh was the supreme commander of his army, all administrative and operational control being vested in him. From the very inception of his rule, he tried to establish as effective a control as was possible under the circumstances. In the words of a contemporary, he was trying 'to overcome the great weakness of the Indian armies of the previous century that the soldiers obeyed the colonel (immediate boss) and cared nothing for the General (distant and ultimate boss).' 'His orders in the army are peremptory' writes Metcalfe, 'and are universally obeyed; the greatest Sardar and the lowest soldier seem to pay the same defence to him.' But this control was not yet willingly accepted by his men, for the same authority hastens to add: 'But he does not reign in the hearts of his people. The disaffection which is known to prevail in his army, exhibits symptoms of danger to his power, whenever a favourable opportunity should present itself for casting off his tyranny, but at present his superior keeps all in subordination.' As a means to the end of building up an effective control, the Maharaja introduced the practice of holding regular musters and frequent inspections. This practice had been in vogue under the Great Mughals, but during the 18th century had fallen into disuse. By reintroducing it and by insisting on its being carried out, he showed at this early stage his clear grasp of military issues and his organising ability.'

Training of the cavalry way left to the initiative of the individual horsemen which was the case under the Mughals and the Marathas. Ranjit Singh's inspiring leadership, however gave a powerful impetus to the men who began to take keener interest in practicing riding, swordsmanship and tentpegging, etc. Combined manoeuvers also, it seems, received the Maharaja's attention, as one such manoeuvre was demonstrated by him before Mr. Metacalf in 1808. The greater part to his time was, however devoted to the training of artillery and infantry. He tried his utmost to get instructors from the trained troops of the English Company, the Maratha chiefs and Begum Samru. To heighten the interest of his men, he himself attended their parades and offered handsome rewards and quick promotions to the best of them.

To curb laziness and lassitude in his troops, he gave top priority to the conduct of regular reviews and inspections.

'In regard to morale, the object of Ranjit Singh was to lift the Sikhs out of the abyss of demoralisation into which they had fallen and to rekindle in them the old flame of zeal and enthusiasm of the pre-Misals period. But for the time being, the attainment of this object was hindered by the Jealousy of rival chiefs who could not tolerate his growing power. However as the prospect of a strong Sikh monarchy gradually unfolded itself, they started rallying round the Maharaja. In course of time, they developed the ideology of a commonwealth and came to bear some resemblance to the troops of Cromwell's New Army. Ranjit Singh attached immense weight to this matter and though his main dependence was upon foreign mercenaries during this period, he consciously stove to identify himself more and more with the Khalsa and to develop and harness the dynamic force of Sikhism to the ends of his political policy.'[14]

A note of complaint was rightly sent by Charles Matcalfe to Edmonstone on 4 July 1808, 'Raja Ranjit Singh occasionally makes incursions upon the territories of his neighbours and generally loses no favourable opportunity of adding to his conquests. He is also frequently engaged in subduing important chieftains by what may be supposed to be securing the boundary lines of his dominions?'[15]

The Sikh chiefs lightning success in his military adventures was mainly due to the fact that the maintained first rate artillery and cavalry, besides well-trained soldiery. In fact, 'Guns and horses were Ranjit's passions. To obtain his celebrated mare Laili he was said to have spent 60 lakhs and 12,000 lives.'[16] As for artillery, 'The Rajah's attachment to guns, is so great that he will never miss an opportunity of obtaining a gun. If he learns that there is a gun in any fort, he cannot rest until he has taken the fort to get at the gun, or until the gun has been given up to him to save the fort. He immediately dismounts the gun from the wall, and drags it after him, as an addition to his field train. He boasted to me once, that he had made the Rajah of Puttealah give him a fine gun, which the Rajah wished to rescue for 20,000 rupees.'[17]

The systematic aggressions and usurpations of Ranjit Singh and the war-like measures undertaken by him established this fact quite clearly that he was very keen and anxious to establish a Sikh monarchy extending from the Indus to the Jamuna, and to achieve his aim, he was prepared to undertake any kind of military measure on an elaborate scale that would help him in strengthening his administrative hold over this region.

Thus the territorial incursions by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the Cis-Sutlej region and the danger of French invasion of India in the near future had convinced the Governor-General of India that a temporary deviation in the official policy of the East India Company's government would be a useful phenomenon. The deviation in policy had the full approval of the Court of Directors who empowered him to conduct his policy by appointing a British envoy in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to negotiate a treaty of friendship and cordiality. In this regard, the Governor-General achieved a remarkable success with the speedy attainment of the British aim in view. The way he conducted the British policy through the agency of his envoy to the court of Lahore earned him much appreciation and applause from the Court of Directors.

II

The Anglo-French struggle for the preservation and consolidation of their territorial and commercial interests in India continued throughout the eighteenth century with a remarkable success for the British East India Company. The three Carnatic wars had greatly damaged the French interests in India and their formidable leaders such as Dupleix, Bussy and Count Lally had met the worst defeats of their careers. Consequently, the French had lost all their possessions in India by successive defeats by the year 1793. But in spite of all these military set-backs, the French menace continued even during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

After the fall of Pondicherry in 1761, a large number of Frenchmen found their way to the courts of various Indian princes. They joined their armies and soon occupied enviable positions on account of their past military experience. In the last decade of the

eighteenth century, the French influence rose considerably high in some of the prominent *durbars* of India.

Thus with the growing French fraternisation with the anti-British potentates of India, like Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, the Francophobia in the minds of the British statesmen in India and England re-emerged as a tangible reality. In fact, Tipu had in his service a well-trained French contingent which was commended by De Lallee. When Lallee was killed in an action in 1790, his cousin De Vigie took over as commander of the contingent. '...It was neither numerous nor strong, and after the fall of Pondicherry in 1793 was deprived of the means of receiving regular reinforcements. This contingent soon languished and became a rubble, but its Jacobinical enthusiasm became naturally a source of anxiety for the English.'[18]

In the state of Hyderabad, the local military forces were organized, trained and commanded by Raymond. His forces had successful combat against the Marathas. For his overall success as a superb administrator and a unique military commander he was given territorial assignment, yielding a revenue of eighteen lakhs of rupees a year. Thus encourged, he could communicate with the French and their manoeuvers eastward. 'No adventurer in India ever stood higher than he did. He was brave, magnificent, generous, affable and vigilant.... No European of mark who preceded him, no European of mark who followed him in India, ever succeeded in gaining to such an extent, the love, the esteem, the admiration of the natives of the country.'

The French military adventurers and their intrigues could not do much headway and failed to shake the foundations of the English power in India. The failure of their position and strategy, from time to time, gave much strength to the Company's Government in India who could safely carry on the programme of expansion towards the north-west.

The very fact that the French still possessed important and strategic island—stations on the high seas which could be used, at an opportune moment, for the implementation of their cherished ambition to gain power and ascendancy on the eastern continent, had created doubts, anxiety and fear in the minds of the British officials, both at home and abroad. This fear was not limited to the continent.

Napoleon's successful invasion of Egyptian territory had kindled speculation as to the possibility of a French attack on the East India Company's interests in India.[19] Under these conditions the British mind was overtaken by a gave apprehension of a probable combination of their Indian adversaries with their European rivals on their successful entry into the Indian sub-continent. Consequently, during the first decade of the nineteenth century, virtually all-British diplomatic, commercial and military machinations in the countries to the west and north-west of India were directed towards the repulse of these horrible and dangerous anticipated threats.[20]

During the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley (1798-1805), the fear to intervention in India by France increased. Wellesley received intelligence about the plan of General Malartic, the French Governor in the Island of Mauritius, to render military assistance to Tipu Sultan, the sworn enemy of the East India Company, in response to an appeal made by him through his two emissaries. During this period, a large body of French troops arrived in the Island of Mauritius in order to encourage anti-British designs of Tipu. His main motive was to seek an opportunity to cripple the British in India in alliance with the Sultan of Mysore. These dangerous proceedings were taken up seriously by Lord Wellesley who took speedy measures with the sanction of the Home Government to meet any intending crisis and to eliminate the French influence from India for good.

An a preliminary measure in this regard, Lord Wellesley successfully organised a powerful and a formidable combination with the Nizam and the Marathas against the anti-British 'nursery' in Mysore. In this way, he proved himself instrumental in destroying Tipu and his independent kingdom. In the process, the Nizam of Hyderabad was made the most French forces in his dominion. Besides, he dismissed from service all-French military adventurers and pledged never to employ and European national hostile to the British interests in India.

Lord Wellesley also crippled the Marathas by waging wars against them. His successful implementation of the scheme of subsidiary alliances served as a powerful instrument in his hands to accomplish the ends of his forward policy. Similarly, several other

states were enterapped into it, and his grand project of establishing British supremacy was brilliantly achieved.

All these anti-French activities in India did not, in any way, abate the enthusiasm and military fervour of Napoleon and his design in the east. A large force of Cossacks and Russian regulars were to march by way of Turkestan, Khiva and Bokhara to the upper Indus valley, whole 35,000 French troops under General Massena were to descend the Danube and going by way of the Black Sea and the Caspian, were to make an attack on Persia take Herat and then Candhar and unite with the Russians on the Indus.[21] For the implementation of such an adventurous and ambitious military scheme, he found a powerful ally in Paul I, the Czar of Russia who welcomed his terms. This scheme, however could not materialise as the Czar died on 24 March 1801. Had their scheme taken a practical shape, it would have created a difficult situation for the British and endangered their interests in India. The knowledge of this Franco-Russian collaboration naturally obsessed the British mind with an acute sense of danger to their imperial and commercial interests in the Indian sub-continent through Persia.

It was indeed a difficult international situation directly affecting the British interests in India. Lord Wellesley took it up with all seriousness and made plans to woo the Shah of Persia to a friendly alliance. John Malcolm was sent as ambassdor to the court of the Shah of Persia who singed a political and commercial treaty on 28 June 1801.[22]

These favourable circumstances, however did not last for a long period, and there was a change of circumstances after two years which moulded the French connections with the British in India. On 15 February 1803, Decaen, the French General at Pondicherry, received instructions from Napoleon advising him to establish secret contacts with the princes of India in order so secure a strong and firm base in India and to devise plans for any future evenuality of a war with the British without arousing their suspicions.[23] But circumstances did not prove propitious for Decaen, as the British position had already been considerably strengthened on the eve of his arrival at Pondicherry. The French army under General Perron in Sindhia's service, on which he

banked so much, had been removed from Gwalior territories by the Treaty of Surji Arjan Gaon prior to his dispatch of an emissary to him from Port Louis.[24]

Another factor, which greatly weakened the position of the French in India, was the systematic arrests of the French secret agents in Indian states. Their communication with them was frequently intercepted and this kind of regular interception enabled the British to know which of the Indian powers had to be kept under close observation. In fact, Decaen and his associates were quite hopeful of a tremendous support from them, but they were not fully aware of the precarious position to which they were systematically reduced by the vigorous policy pursued by Lord Wellesley. Under these circumstances prevalling in India, it was quite certain that the French intrigues and aggressive designs could not have caused any harm to the British and any French attempt at invasion of India with a few thousand troops would have ended in disaster. Notwithstanding these developments in India in favour of the British, Napoleon wrote a letter to Decres, the Minister of Marine, on 16 January 1805 in which he mentioned about a plan of sending a military expedition to India. This, however was soon abandoned, when Napoleon got a full appraisal of the situation in India from him.[25]

Meanwhile, international events took such a turn that Persia began to show more interest and leaning towards France than England. The reason for this change of attitude was obvious. England had refused to provide help to Persia in connection with the restitution of her territories[26] from Russia. On this issue, she advanced an unconvincing plea that it was not feasible for her to spoil relations with it in conformity with the treaty of 1801.

This reply was never expected by Persia from England. The former felt much disillusioned and it, therefore planned to seek an ally elsewhere at any cost in order to safeguard its own integrity.[27] Besides, during this period, two French representatives, Romieu and Jaubert, reached Teheran in 1805 and 1806 in order to collect the requisite information. Of these, the former died of illness without completing his mission, and the latter returned to the Imperial camp at Warsaw on 8 February 1807 to report his findings to Napoleon. He was preceded by Mirza Reza Khan, with whom Napoleon entered into a

friendly political Treaty of Finkenstein on 14 May 1807. As a result of this friendly treaty, General Gardanne started from Warsaw on 8 June with a huge staff of army officers, archaeologists and geographers. The Persian envoy, Mirza Reza Khan accompanied him. But when the mission reached Constantinople, Gardanne received the views of the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit which naturally filled his mind with doubt and suspicion regarding the success of his mission.

When Gardanne and the members of his mission reaches Teheran on 4 December, the Shah received them with warmth and cordiality. The Treaty of Finkenstein was ratified. Besides, a military and a commercial connection were concluded. By the first, the Shah was to purchase from France 20,000 muskets and was to place the island of Karrack at the disposal of the French.

In fact, Gardanne's mission had the specific aims and objects of imparting military training to the Persian army and also to devise ways and means to invade India with full military preparations. In this task, two French Officers, Verdier and Lamy did the most commendable work in training the Persian troops, and soon after they could establish a foundry at Isaphan for casting cannons.

This was not the end of Napoleon's political and military alliances. With a very ambitious programme of expansion on a major part of the globe, he felt no hesitation in humiliating one power after another. On 14 June 1807, he crushed the combined forces of Prussia and Russia at Friendland and compelled Czar Alexander I to sign a humiliating treaty at Tilsit on 9 July 1807.[28]

By the Treaty of Tilsit the two powerful military powers of Europe lay prostrate before the superior and unchallenged military resources of France, and it appeared obvious at the time that the foundations of the Napoleonic Empire in Europe were firmly established and the great leader had reached the meridian of his glory, ready to embark on an eastern adventure in a smooth way, without any strong rival on the route.

This treaty enabled the French Emperor to secure the active help and collaboration of Russia in the task of completing and enforcing rigidly the continental system, indeed, the potent weapon in his hands to strike a ruinous and disastrous blow on the growing prosperity and

greatness of England without waging a war against it. Besides this, he was determined to annihilate the British Empire by a drive into her Asian possessions with the help and assistance of the Russian Cossacks. He was confident of the fact that it would be easier for him to transport an army from Paris to Delhi than from Boulogne to Falkestone.[29]

At Tilsit, Napoleon had only one object in view, namely to engage Europe at large in his contest a *outrance* against Great Britain. In the words of J.A.R. Marriott, it this context, Alexander was an important asset in his diplomatic balancesheet. As a result, the news of the Treaty of Tilsit had a very depressing and demoralising effect upon the British statement and raised their alarm to their fingertips.[30]

The nightmare of French designs on British interests in the east was found to be at its worst. Indeed, the French peril to the British interests appeared to be most acute and psychologically very much magnified. The effect of this state of mind had powerful influence upon the anti-French British decisions of that time.[31]

'The peace of Tilsit gave Russia temporary respite from the contest with France. That the truce would prove uneasy and that there would be a renewal of the conflict was inherent in the settlement, for it left control of Europe divided between two giants suspicious of each other.' 'At least I shall gain time', the Czar had sighed after Tilsit. He had assured Prussia that she would some day recover everything she had lost.

'It has been maintained that Napoleon fought Russia between 1805 and 1807 not to humble her but to win her friendship in the interest of extending the continental system, his only effective weapon against his most implacable foe, England. If this thesis is accepted, it must be admitted that his attempt to secure Russian goodwill failed completely. He did not even succeed in winning the Czar's friendship, for Alexander looked upon Tilsit as no more than a way to buy time. Napoleon could not have been so naive as to suppose that he could win Russian favour by reviving the Polish State.'[32]

'After Tilsit it might have been thought that Napoleon would rest on his laurels, content with his unchallenged military supremacy. The

capacity for accepting a limit to his ambition was against his nature.... The Continental System was a device for bringing Great Britain to her knees; but it was also, quite apart from this, a method of increasing and consolidating the wealth and, therefore the greatness of France. Moreover the Continental system was not invented out of nothing by Napoleon: it was a development of the policies of the Republic and the *ancien regime.* The hated commercial treaty of 1786 was annulled immediately after the declaration of war in 1793. All British goods were excluded from France; all shipping entering France ports had to be French or that of the country from which the goods came. "Let us decree", cried Barere, "a Solemn Navigation Act and the isle of shopkeepers will be ruined." ...It was generally believed that British power rested on her naval strength and her subsides—the guineas of Pitt; and both these on the profits she derived from trade. To destroy that trade by cutting off its markets would ruin her finances and the power as effectively as if every part in the British Isles were sealed: thus could the sea power be blockaded from the land.'[33]

When Lord Minto tookover office as the Governor General of India in July 1807, he was very much overtaken by the dreadful Frasncophobia. After a few months of his arrival in India, he received intelligence of General Gardanne's anti-British activities in Persia, resulting in the establishment of French predominance in the councils of teheran. The arrival of three hundred French soldiers and twenty-four officers at Tabrez on the western side of the Caspian Sea left no room for doubts in his mind that the ruler of France actively meditated the execution of his cherished plan of launching a massive invasion on India through Persia and he had already made considerable progress in the furtherance of that project.[34] Its successful implementation, however depended upon the nature of the assistance the French were to receive from the governments of Persia and Turkey. He believed that so long as France would remain engaged in the continental war, it would be difficult to effect the successful implementation of her intended project.[35] But in the event of the continued submission of the subjugated powers of Europe, the French troops would be afforded a free hand to launch their military energy, ability and perseverance of the French Emperor. He feared that if once French troops succeeded in penetrating into the Persian dominions, the

way would be opened for their other waves to traverse them and carry on further military incursions unchecked.[36]

The Governor-General was of the opinion that the primary object of the French advance into Persia was to occupy the Port of Gombroon and the strategic islands of Armuz and Karrack in the Persian Gulf, and to use these places as military bases for further infiltration in the east. The ascendancy of France, once established in the territories of Persia and the Persian waters, would enable her gradually to extend her influence by conciliation or by conquest towards India, and ultimately open a passage into the dominions of the East India Company.

In this situation, the Governor-General felt convinced that the Persian opposition to France would alone frustrate their designs, and this could be brought about by convincing the Shah of Persia of the illusive benefits, he hoped to acquire from the French alliance, and the positive harm that it might bring to him and his country. Therefore, with a view to alienating Persia from the influence of France, he decided to dispatch an officer, in whose talents, zeal and ability, he could repose confidence, with full powers to negotiate with Persia.[37]

Meanwhile, the Government of India received an intelligence about the disputes between the Ameers of Sind and the King of Afghanistan. The Ameers of Sind sent their *vakils* to the Shah of Persia to seek his support against the King of Kabul and promised to pay him tributes on attainment of freedom from the Afghan yoke.[38] The Shah of Persia was readily agreeable to the proposals of the government of Sind which appointed an agent to proceed to that country with his *vakils* as a token of his friendly gesture.[39]The French emissaries in Persia took advantage of the presence of the *vakils* of Sind and they endeavoured to obtain the consent of their government for the admission of French ships into its ports. It was alleged by the Government of India that these negotiations led to a satisfactory conclusion.[40]

These diplomatic conclusions in Persia greatly magnified the danger of French aggressive designs on the East India Company's interests in India and led to an alarm of serious magnitude in the

Francophob minds of British statesmen and administrators. To them, the use of the ports in Sind by the French naval ships was to be a perpetual source of danger to the growing British commercial and political interests in India. The Governor-General showed much concern about this state of affairs and was greatly perturbed by this probability which appeared to be more in his imagination than in reality. He immediately took steps in order to have a firm grip over the prevailing serious political situation and made an attempt to renew friendly relations already subsisting with Sind. The plan was to prevent the French from taking the alleged concession which might give a foothold to them on the south-west extremity of India and a jumping ground for implementing their projected invasion of British India. Indeed, the chain of French alliances from Persia to Sind was the most disquieting phenomenon pregnant with most serious consequences to British shipping and commerce and their growing political hegemony in India.

In order to implement his plan effectively, the Governor-General decided to dispatch an envoy to the court of the Ameers of Sind. He was commissioned to ascertain the nature and extent of the negotiations between the French and the Ameers of Sind and also between the Government of Persia and Sind.[41]

By planning such an effective measure at diplomatic level, the Governor-General thought that it would be the best means of obtaining authentic information in connection with the nature and progress of French designs, not only in that country but also in the countries north of it as far as Kashmir and Kabul, and might prove an additional source of intelligence in respect of anti-British intrigues of the French in Persia. Besides, his acts were promoted by the supposition of the early approach' of a French force towards the confines of Persia and the expediency of meting the impending danger as a first principle of prudence and precaution.[42]

Besides, the regions of Afghanistan and the Punjab were also most vulnerable. This route might attract in the near future a Franco-Persian advance. The Governor-General who was seized of the whole situation wished to use these two states as buffers in order to safeguard the frontiers of the East India Company. The despatch of two diplomatic mission—one of the King of Kabul and the other to

Maharaja Ranjit Singh—was thought to be an act of utter necessity. By planning so, it was viewed by the British government that these two interests of the Company in India.

At any rate, the Governor-General did not want to leave anything to chance. By all possible means, and with all-pronged diplomatic drives, he wished to keep the danger away from the British territories and to meet it outside their borders, if necessary. The rigid neutrality of his two predecessors and a purely defensive attitude appeared to him ineffective, meaningless and unnecessarily risky, destined to lead the British into a vortex from where escape without positive damage to British interests was improbable. Hence the despatch of missions to various heads of states on and beyound the northwestern borders of British India, and the creation of an effective barrier against the French inroads in the form of an inner and outer layers of states, the inner layer being Lahore and Sind, and the outer layer Kabul and Persia, became his well-thoughout project.

The seriousness of the situation was also realised by the Court of Directors and the foreign office of England. They concurred with the Governor-General in the adoption of the policy of counteracting the French danger to India by taking the border states into greater confidence and bringing them into a chain of definite defensive alliances.[43] In fact, at this juncture. The Frasncophobia in the British mind was at its height and it worked as the most powerful and significant factor in determining the foreign relations of the East India Company's Government in India.

'The fact remains that the Supreme Government in India during the early stage was not fully alive to the danger to which the British possessions in India were exposed from this new quarter. That French intrigues were being carried on in the Court of Persia to some extent, they deemed highly probable, but of their alleged success they entertained great doubts. In fact, they were of the opinion that the reports received from Sir Harford Jones, the British Ambassador at Teheran, were highly exaggerated, and they stood firm in the conviction that the interests of Persia were essentially concerned in maintaining an amicable connection with the British Government than with France. It was only towards the close of 1806 that the progress of the connection between the French and Persia attracted

their notice, and the despatch of an ambassador from the Court of Persia to France made them sensible to the alarming state of affairs.'[44]

In fact, the Shah of Persia had suffered a servere defeat from Russia during 1804-05. He was, therefore trying desperately to seek the support of Napoleon against Russia. During this period, the Shah sent an Ambassador to India to seek the support of British Government in waging a war against Russia. But the Persian ambassador received no indication of such help in a direct or indirect way.

This afforded a clear opportunity to France to take full advantage of the helplessness of the Shah of Persia, thus getting a friendly ally against the common for *i.e.* Russia. 'He had just defeated the Russians on the battle of Eylan on 8 February 1807, and thought it to be an excellent opportunity for harrassing the Russians in Asia and also for materializing his dreams of an Asiatic conquest.'

'In 1807, the preponderance of France in Europe reached its zenith. Napoleon had defeated every army against him, vanquished every enemy and dissolved every league. The British diplomacy was constrained to assume a much wider sphere. The Franco-Russian coalition was regarded by the British ministers as a great and imminent danger to the frontiers of India.'

It so happened that the political situation in Europe had taken a favourable turn for the British in the east. In fact, the tide of events began to take shape westward. Towards the close of the year 1808, Napoleon, after routing the Spanish forces, had installed his brother in Madrid. 'Although proposals for the partition of Turkey and a joint expedition to India had already been made to the Tsar, they were probably little more than political devices to hold his wavering allegiance.' It became wellknown that the friendship, cordiality and harmony established at Tilsit was growing weak day by day. The second potent factor was the rising in Spain which also brought about a significant change in that country. So the Governor-General in India received specific intelligence of this important but favourable turn. Thus the political situation in the European continent convinced him beyond doubt that the prevailing situation required a revision of the policy and also the arrangements to be adopted with reference to the early designs of France.

III

The plan of aggressive French designs on the growing political and commercial supremacy of the East India Company in the Indian sub-contient and Ranjit Singh's territorial expansion in the Trans-Sutlej, Cis-Sutlej and the hilly regions of north-west of India were seriously viewed by the British rulers who had established their sway up to Delhi in the opening years of the nineteenth century.

Indeed, 'Ranjit Singh continued steadily to pursue his career of usurpations on the eastern and southern banks of the Sutlej, and his authority in the Punjab was so completely established, that it became essential to the policy of the British Government in India to enter into amicable relations with his court, and to accomplish this purpose in the year 1808, Mr. Metcalfe was despatched to Lahore."[45]

Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, son of Major Thomas Metcalfe, a Director of the East India Company and Member of Parliament, landed at Calcutta on 1 January 1801. He was barely sixteen years old. By nature he was studious, reserved and thoughtful, and prior to his coming to India, he spent a few years of his educational career at Eton. He indeed 'found at Eton his deepest and most happiness...(His) Eton days were happy in friendships, and in abounding intellectual activity. He never willingly left his books.[46]

Metcalfe's voyage to India took full six months and on the first day of the new century (January 1, 1801)—as if winds and tides had chosen the date of his arrival, to symbolise the destiny which was to make him the most influential single actor in the immense events of the next generation in India—Metcalfe entered the Hugli, the pilot having come on board the previous evening.

'He was not to see England again for thirty-seven years. His age was not quite sixteen, an average age for the men who were entering India as its rulers, and considerably above that of many. Very few, reading the story, of the British in India, realise that it was the custom for our ancestors to start on their careers when today they might almost still be at preparatory schools. Warren Hasting's angry reference to 'mere boys' who were 'heavy-handed rulers of the people' is taken as mere rhetoric (a luxury Hastings rarely indulged in), where it was literal fact. The actual *education* of India's rulers

took place, not in England or Scotland, but in a sense of shifting and dissolving empires. Their schools were battles and intrigues, and the school-masters were adventure and aliens.[47]

Thus Matcalfe arrived in India in the lull between two wars, Mysore had already fallen and Tipu Sultan was no more on the scene the most decisive clash between the expanding political and commercial interests of the East India Company's government and the Marathas, a well-oranised clan of dauntless warrios was plainly to come. Indeed, the Governor-General was resolved to regularise their relations on the basis of Maratha subordination, and to force a chance of doing this.

Metcalfe was the second to the four envoys to set out for Sind, Persia and Kabul. He left Delhi on 5 August 1808 with a elerical staff and a small escort.[48] His staff included a *munshi, Maulvi* Hafizud-Din whom he had known for some years and had much confidence in him, and five clerks to assist him during his stay in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a most energetic, brave, fearless, and ambitious Sikh ruler of the Punjab.

'Metcalfe's salary was to be Rs. 2,000 a month. He was to arrange with Seton for money supplies and presents, escort, servants and secretarial staff. The official escort was to include a competent military surveyor, to examine the route and keep a journal, whole careful of such precautions as 'the ignorance and suspicious' of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs should render expedient. General Hewett, the Commander-in-Chief, thought two such officers necessary—an engineer as well as a survey officer, 'to view the country with a military eye'...And 'the Rajah of Lahore' was informed that a 'Gentleman of Rank, would move forward to call on him as swiftly as possible...[49]

On his appointment as envoy in the Lahore Durbar, Charles Metcalfe expressed sentiments of gratitute and assurance of efficient performance of his duties assigned to him.[50]

'I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23th ultimo informing me that the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in-Council has been pleased to appoint me as the envoy to the Raja of Lahore and conveying instructions for the guidance of my conduct in the proposed mission.

'I cannot find words to express the various direction to which the contents of your despatch give rise. I must take the liberty, however to request that you will assure the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in Council that I am duly impressed with a profused sense of the high honour conferred in me in this arrangement and of the importance of the objects to which it is directed and that no exertions shall be wanting on my part to do justice to the confidence which His Lordships has been pleased to repose in me and to promote to the best of my humble ability the interests committed to my charge.'

On receipt of the news of the appointment of British envoy to his court, Ranjit Singh wrote a letter to the British Resident in Delhi to whom he expressed his sentiments of cordiality and friendliness to the British government no taking such a step was 'my anixous desire to proceed to Hardwar at the late fair for the purpose of performing my religious ceremonies, as also for that of having a personal meeting with you. But every business has its destined moment. I was obliged by affairs of a pressing nature in which the interests of others were involved to defer the sanction of my plan. The deputation of the gentleman in question to this quarter teeming with friendship to convey assurances of amity and goodwill in conformity to the orders of the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General in Council is a source of the most satisfaction to my friendly heart.'[51]

After a few days, Edmonstone sent comprehensive instructions to Metcalfe and advised him on the conduct he should exhibit in his relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[52]

'I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch no. 2, dated the 17th of July soliciting instructions for the guidance of your conduct under the occurrence of certain cases which you have supposed.'

The Governor-General-in-Council is sensible of the advantage which would be derived from your continual attendance on Ranjit Singh in the event of his proceeding on any military expedition which may occasion his protracted absence from his capital, more especially if any negotiation shall be finding at the time. But it is equally certain that the presence of an accredited British officer in his camp would be liable to the misrepresentation which you have foreseen. This would

be particularly liked to be the case in the supposition of Ranjit Singh's arms being directed against any of Sikh chiefs on this side of the Sutlej whose own fears and jealousy would easily suggest to them the suspicion of a participation or at least an acquiescence in the designs of Ranjit Singh.'

'Upon the whole His Lordship-in-Council is of opinion that it would be better if you should not attend Rajah Ranjit Singh on such expeditions as those now underconsideration without special orders to that effect. It will always be in your favour to join his army after it shall have marched, if such a measure should appear to be desirable.'

'It is not probable that the departure of Ranjit Singh on any enterprise will be as sudden to as to preclude you from referring to government for instructions, for the guidance of your conduct in the particular occasion when government will be able to determine with a knowledge of all the facts of the case whether the public interests will be promoted or impeded your accompanying the Rajah or in other words, whether the advantage to be expected from your presence in his camp will be such, as to render it admissible to disregard the effect it may provide in the mind of the neighbouring chiefs.'

'His Lordship-in-Council desires that you will, in all such cases, apply to government for orders, reporting at the same time, every circumstance which can tend to assit the judgment of the Governor-General-Council.'

'If Ranjit Singh shows interest to you and his wish for you to accompany him before your receipt of the instructions of government, it will be easy for you to decline a compliance on the ground of your orders not providing for the use of his capital but that you may expect to receive the directions of the Governor-General-in-Council on the subject, as soon as the Rajah's intentions, shall be known to him.'

Matcalfe was to establish a *dak* between Delhi and Amritsar. He was to get information of all the countries between Persia and the Jumuna, particularly of those between Persia and the Sutlej—full geographical and topographical knowledge, data as to supplies and roads and political conditions. He was to findout everything about Ranjit Singh, his resources, the constitution of his government, relations with other states, nature and details of his correspondence

with Holkar and other chiefs of Hindustan, and above all, the number, description and character of his troops. He was to send back the fullest confidential reports, both to Seton[53] and the Secretary of the secret and political department in Calcutta, and to attend to any suggestion which either gave him.

Thus the main task of the British envoy was to counteract the designs of the French. Besides, countering the aggressive policy of Ranjit Singh against the Cis-Sutlej states was an additional motive for deputing the mission. He was, in fact, 'to woo the great Rajah to an alliance, while refusing him the increase of territory on which he had set his heart.'[54]

The British government thought that Ranjit Singh, during negotiations with its envoy, might demand some concessions before agreeing point realised by Metcalfe. It was its apprehension that he might ask for British alliance for other wars or his involvement with other powers. It he did, the envoy was to remember that the East India Company's government had no connection with states that were engaged in schemes of conquest in the Indian sub-continent.

The objects of all these missions in Lord Minto's own words were, 'to conciliate the princes...to obtain their consent to the passage of our troops through their country, or their admission into their territories, for the purpose of opposing a French army in their projected invasion of Hindustan...to establish such defensive engagements with these governments as may obtain the co-operation, or at least their friendly aid and assistance, to our military operations and to our cause generally...also to remove from the minds of these princes any suspicions regarding the attitude of the British Government towards them and to plant the seeds of confidence and union.'[55]

The monsoon clogged Matcalfe's path and put him to 'a circuitous route.' But he entered enthusiastically on his task, seeing in his official instructions nothing amiss. Although he had to pass through territories of chiefs whose political status was yet doubtful, he was quick to discover the political condition of the whole region.

The British encourage arrived at Patiala on 22 August where they were received by Imam-ud-Din, one of the advisers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The British envoy was able to view Ranjit Singh's

'favour and kindness to all' though Raja Sahib Singh whose uncle also cordially received him and requested him to break his journey. Sahib Singh of Patiala made a dramatic gesture by presenting keys of his citadel to the englishman, begging him to return them to him to symbolise British protection over Patiala.

The British envoy had thus personally observed how submissive the Cis-Sutlej *Rajas* and other chiefs were to him. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh 'had no cause to be attracted to the side of the English whose interests he knew were adverse to his own, so far as the Cis-Sutlej states, the choicest object of his ambition were concerned.'

'Taught to regard the British Government as his natural enemy and the obstacle to the extent of his conquests, Ranjit Singh might fear that the East India Company planned a conspiracy against him.'

'Rumours were already afloat concerning the sinister designs of the *firangee* mission whose objects Metcalfe had not disclosed. The atmosphere around the British camp began to grow tense, and the local *sardars* indulged in a whispering campaign'. In this context. Metcalfe reported to his government that his mission had been viewed with much suspicion and its reception lacked signs of friendship and cordiality.

'In brief', the envoy wrote, 'it would appear that I am regarded as a dangerous enemy to be guarded against, rather than the envoy of a friendly state charged with most amicable duties.'

Seldom perhaps in Anglo-Indian diplomatic annals, was so delicate a task entrusted to one so young in years. At the age of 23, Charles Metcalfe had already won the approbation of the government as 'an excellent public servant' and his appointment to lead the mission to Lahore showed that the Governor-General reposed great confidence in his character, ability and local knowledge for the purpose. He had served as an Assistant to the Resident at Delhi and had access to the political correspondence with the Sikh states. He combined this knowledge with the information gained at first hand during his negotiations with Ranjit Singh in composing his official despatches to the Government of India. 'Consequently, his voluminous despatches from Ranjit Singh's court exhibit a rare diplomatic skill in grasping the true character and resources of the Sikh country; the

political, military and financial state of the State of Lahore; the character of Ranjit Singh, the extent of his ambitions and dominions; the nature of his relations with other states; his habits, prejudices and caprices and finally, his real disposition towards, the British Government.'

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3. *Ibid.*, A major part mentioned here now forms the part of Pakistan; see p. 315.
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5. The ruler of Jammu paid a sum of Rs. 20,200 in cash and an elephant to the Lahore Chief.
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5

British Interference

The negotiations for a cordial and friendly alliance between Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the rising Sikh chief of the Punjab and Charles Metcalfe, the diplomatic envoy of the East India Company's government, leading to the final settlement in the form of the Treaty of Amritsar signed on 25th April 1809 were the result of continuous, consistent and ceaseless efforts on the part of the latter in spite of much reluctance, and avoidance for a final conclusion by the former. This process combined with the uneasy, difficult and hazardous travelling from Delhi to Patiala, Phillaur *ghat,* Kasur, Amritsar and a few areas in the Cis-Sutlej region took about eight months. Both the youngmen, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was twenty-eight and Charles Metcalfe, was twenty-three, were face to face in numerous meetings and discussions not unmixed with serious doubt and suspicion in their minds. Both of them tried their level best to show an air of superiority of their respective governments, strength, power and resources. At certain occasions, when the agreement in view appeared a somewhat remote possibility, a sense of anger, disagreement and dissent was expressed, both verbally and in writing from both the sides. However the element of statesmanship, diplomatic skill, shrewdness combined with high degree of intelligence and consideration of the recognition of each others' political and commercial rights dominated the scene during these months. As a result there of, these negotiations were successful, and its final conclusion, the treaty of friendship, cordiality and mutual help, became a most significant phenomenon in establishing and maintaining Anglo-Sikh relations for three decades.

The British government at the Fort William showed keenness and anxiety to make these negotiations effective and fruitful and it,

therefore advised its envoy to behave in a particular fashion in order to bring the Lahore chief into the diplomatic snare.

Two weeks before the British envoy could reach Kasur, the officially fixed meeting-place with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the former had received intelligence of the working of mind of the Sikh ruler who began seriously doubting the *bonafides* of the British mission.

The Maharaja lost no time in taking such measures by which he could avoid or postpone his meeting with the British envoy.[1] To make his strategy more effective and result oriented, he was in constant touch with his ministers, advisers and the chiefs of the adjoining friendly areas. They counselled the Maharaja to be cautious in his dealings with the British envoy and not to take any hasty decision with him. He was advised to avoid any kind of meeting or signing an agreement by which his territorial possessions were to be fixed at a particular point, more agreeable to British point of view, and his expansion towards Jamuna should not be jeopardised for all time to come.

After getting intelligence of these facts and figures, Metcalfe informed Edmonstone on 2 September.[2]

'I have the honour to inform you that I crossed the Sutledge[3] yesterday at Felour Ghat.[4]

'For many days a report has been prevalent that Raja Ranjit Singh had marched to Kusoor with the intention of crossing of the Beas below the junction of that river with the Sutledge and of proceeding on some military expedition to the south part. The Raja of Patiala has been considerably alarmed and has been of late engaged in preparations for the defence of his forts and country.

'...It is hardly possible that he could act so strangely at this particular time as he is notorious for an unsteady and whimsical disposition. It is impossible to form any opinion of his intentions but in the present instance it seems most probable that his trip to Kusoor which is only 20 coss distant from Umritsur is a temporary excursion, and I expect that he will return to the latter place before the arrival of the mission. I am therefore proceeding without deviation towards Umritsur and Lahore. Whatever, may be the intention of Rajah Ranjit Singh, I cannot be guided by them as he has not communicated them to me.

While Charles Matcalfe and the member of his escort were encamped at Kasur, the atmosphere, in the town and in the area round about, was surcharged with doubt, suspicion, jealousy, anger and hatred for the foreign mission. The Maharaja had gathered his huge force in the subservient to demonstrate his strength and power. Many Sikh chiefs, subservient to the Lahore Durbar, were also on attendance of the Maharaja. It appeared to Metcalfe that Ranjit Singh might not open a dialogue for friendly and cordial relationship with the East India Company's government. In that eventuality, he thought, the very purpose of checkmating the French advance towards the Indian sub-continent and the Maharaja's advance towards Jamuna would meet a dismal failure. He informed Edmonston thus:[5]

On receiving intelligence of this mission Ranjit Singh marched from Lahore to this place[6], and called upon all the chiefs and troops subject to his authority to join him. I am now convinced as I was formerly inclined to suppose that the army was assembled partly for the purpose of making a display of a great military force before the British mission and partly for the purpose of raising the Raja's importance in the eyes of own people by receiving a mission from the British Government in the presence of all his assembled chiefs and Sardars.

Proceeding with such views his whole conduct has been guided by them and instead of considering how he could best show his sense of the mark of friendship and confidence manifested by Government in the mission of an envoy or how he could most properly fulfil what is due to the rank and dignity of the great state by which the which the envoy was and he has been bent upon demonstrating his own greatness which he has conceived, would be increased by the discrimination of respect to the British mission.

'....I expected that the Raja would pay a visit to me; I found, however from his silence on the subject that he did not intend to propose that ceremony himself and it was reported that the question been discussed in a council of chiefs.

'There are at present a number of persons with him who would gain if they could hurry about a misunderstanding between British Government and this chief and who would consider evers impediment

thrown in the way of an approach to a cordial connection between the two states as advantageous ground to themselves. These persons are not only those chiefs whose territories are situated between the Sutlej and the Jamuna, at present in Ranjit Singh's camp. There are several of the chiefs of territories in this side of the Sutlej, governing under his usurped disposition who have not made an attempt to throw off the yoke but who would be glad to bring upon him the enemity of the British Government that they might escape from his tyranny and in his downfall.

'Persons of both descriptions view with apprehension every approximation to a friendly intercourse between the two states, those under the well-grounded alarm that it will strengthen the power of Ranjit Singh over them, those for a fear that it may lead to their subjection to his authority.'

'Chiefs of both parties, I believe have used, whatever influence they might have with the Raja, in order to diminish the form of respect to be observed towards the mission the such a degree as might give offence to Governor-General-in-Council and if they have not successed, it is I think to be attributed to the better suggestions of the Raja's own judgment.

'It is almost superfluous to observe that I have been determined to counteract if possible the designs of those mischievous advisers of whose intrigue I had suspicion before my arrival; by not allowing the unfavourable appearances of my reception to make any change in the conciliating line of conduct that it was my duty to pursue. Certainly I could not view an evident disposition to deprive the British envoy of the portion of respect due to his government with regret; neither did I conceive that forms of ceremony in present occasion were of triflling consideration, yet I did not think that I should be justified in putting the general success of the mission by strong expressions of disgust, or by conscious adherence to all the forms presented by myself. I plainly stated that it was impossible for me to be pleased with that was passing but I was careful to avoid any language that could tend to disturb good temper.'

'The attempts of the interested and intriguing councillors who were labouring to make mischief, were assisted by appeals to the price and self-interest of the Rajah.'[7]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh paid his first visit to the camp of Charles Matcalfe on 16 September 1809 at Kasur.[8] It was marked with an atmosphere of cordiality although there was no dialogue of a serious nature. 'Yesterday morning the Maharaja paid me a visit. Captain Popham met him between his camp and me and I received him at the entrance of an enclosure in front of the suite of tents which had been prepared for the occasion with the honour due to his rank.'

'He was accompanied by a select party of chiefs and by the officers of his State and Household....His questions and observations were able and appropriate. He spoke with great respect of the British troops.'

In observance of official formalities and towards courtesies, commonly shown by the Head of a State towards the envoy of a foreign government, Ranjit Singh wrote a friendly note to Charles Matcalfe on 17 September, 1808. The Maharaja hinted to him in unequivocal terms about the programme of his March with a force in the Cis-Sutlej region.

'I never before, at any time, under any emergency, in any place, have made so long a halt as I have now, solely in consequence of the friendship between this Government and the Honourable Company which by the blessing of God has been increasing and improving from the time in which His Excellency, Lord Lake came into this country, to the present happy hour. My camp has remained in this place so long in the expectation of your arrival. Thanks giving to the grace of the Almighty, this wish of my heart, that is, your arrival and the pleasure of seeing you has been obtained in a proper manner.

'Although it is different to feel satisfied from the interview of friends whose hearts are united, and although the times of meeting, however may seem too far, yet affairs of State must be attended to. Consequently, I am about to march immediately for the settlement of certain districts. In my notion it is considered very auspicious to march on the first day of the moon and my march is appointed for that day. Therefore be pleased to make the friendly communications on the part of the Right Honourable the Governor-General with which form His Lordship's letters, I understand you to be charged in order that I may act accordingly; my anxiety cannot admit of any longer expectation.'

The British envoy became suspecious of the Maharaja's plan with a force in the Cis-Sutlej region and hastened to send a note to the Lahore chief.[9] He clarified the existing relationship between the two governments and also the main reasons for mutual jealousy and suspicions.'

'By the blessing of God, the relations of friendship have been firmly established between you and the British Government from the time when His Excellency, General Lord Lake was in this country and have been daily improved particularly since the period when you wrote a very friendly letter to the Right Honourable Lord Minto, the Governor General congratulating his Lordship-in-Council on his arrival in India. In consequence, when you formed the intention of visiting Hardwar in order to bathe in the Holy Ganges, His Lordship deputed me for the purpose of receiving you with every respect and attending you during your stay in the quarter. It happened that your intentions were postponed. The Right Honourable, the Governor-General wishing to display a signal mark of his friendship and regard, has now commanded me to repair to your court, to express the satisfaction with which His Lordship views the existing harmony and concord between the two states, and with a view to establish and improve the ties of intimacy and union. I hope to have the honour of waiting upon you at your leisure, when I will make the communications with' which I am entrusted by the Right Honourable the Governor-General and present a letter which I have from His Lordship to your address.'

'This jealousy of the British Government has three sources. (1) all the chiefs in his Dominions. (2) the chiefs between the Sutlej and the Jamuna (3) Caubul.'

The British envoy tried his best to win the confidence of the Maharaja. In a meeting with Ranjit Singh, he prefaced his oration by emphasising the frienliness of the East India Company's government and stated thus,[10] 'His Lordship and received authentic advice that the French who were endeavouring to establish themselves in Persia, had formed the design of invading these countries and of seizing Kabul and Punjab. His Lordship's first care was to give warning to those states which this intelligence concerned....These measures had been adopted by the Governor-General in the honest spirit of friendship....It

was quite evident that the interests of all the states in this quarter required that the interests of all the states in this quarter required that they should unite in defence of their dominions and for the destruction of the enemies' armies.'

The British envoy replied that the British army was always ready and it would march beyond Kabul if necessary; but that 'the moment in which the enemy might be expected could not be at present ascertained.' At this reply, the Maharaja seemed to think that in that case he could afford a little time to think things over.[11]

Meanwhile, Edmonstone[12] communicated with Metcalfe and apprised him of the aim and object of the mission. 'The object of this mission is not merely the protection of the Sikh chiefs on this side of the Sutlej against the aggressions of the Rajah of Lahore although under the resolution now adopted that protection must be effectively afforded. It had reference also to the eventual approval of an army directed to the invasion of India. By protecting those chiefs we secure their attachment to our interests and by establishing a force on the Northwestern frontier of the territory between the Sutlej and the Jamuna, we afford an earnest of that protection and obtain the command of those territories for any purposes connected in with a system of defensive arrangement. In that advanced position also we shall be prepared to take immediate advantage of any event in the Rajah's territories in which the support or employment of the British troops may be required by the exigency of the public.

Matcalfe was not equipped to discuss the ticklish problem of the *Doab.*[13] He however pointed out, 'that the boundary of the Company's territories was fixed, and that there was no design, whatever to exceed it.' So the only unresolved question was whether or not certain chiefs, were under British protection.

As to an alliance, Charles Metcalfe said that it must be purely defensive, but that if Ranjit Singh had territorial claims on. Afghanistan, the British government was not likely to interfere with their prosecution. He, in fact, wished to hear that there would be no objection to Elphinstone passing through the Punjab to Kabul.

The tone of discussion between the British envoy and the Maharaja showed outward cordiality on both the sides. But Metcalfe

was greatly surprised when Aziz-ud-din explained to him that the Sikh chief was moving to the river Beas and he, therefore, desired the British mission to follow him. Metcalfe, although indignant, at this sudden movement of the Maharaja reluctantly agreed to follow him with hesitation. But he wished to know what the Maharaja's intentions were? He was informed by his *munshi* that the Lahore chief wished to capture Faridkot and other areas in the Cis-Sutlej region.

Indeed Ranjit Singh had the feeling that all the talk about the French danger to him was a trick and a diplomatic move on the part of the East India Company's government, covering a sinister design, to annex his state. He also did not relish the idea of an alliance between the British government and Kabul; and he, therefore argued that it might be advisable for Elphinstone to go by way of Bahawalpur.

The negotiations between the Sikh chief and British envoy had not much advanced, when the former suddenly broke up his camp and made an incursion into the districts south of the Sutlej, at the head of a well-trained army, leaving instructions for Faqir Aziz-ud-din to follow him alongwith the British envoy. Metcalfe felt offended at this kind of gesture of the Maharaja, but he maintained patience and forbearance like a shrewd diplomat who wished to achieve his aim as he had been advised by his government. He followed the Sikh chief up to Khai where another meeting between the two took place. This, meeting, however did not prove fruitful. The reasons were obvious.

Metcalfe argued that by agreeing to a treaty with the Company's government, the Maharaja would benefit if the French attacked him, and lose nothing if they did not do so. Ranjit Singh did not deny this fact, and therefore; 'expressed equivocally his readiness to enter into a defensive alliance against the French and any other powers that might be in league with them.' 'He, however asked for a perpetual alliance between the two states; non-interference with the establishment of his authority over all-Sikhs, and a free hand with Afghanistan, On the first point, Metcalfe was encouraging, on the second, he recommended a reference to the Governor-General, and on the third, he pointed out that a French advance would 'compel' Lahore and Kabul to become allies.

Now Ranjit Singh sent his General Karam Chand to seize Faridkot which surrendered on 1 October 1808 without any resistance

to the superior forces of the Lahore chief. The Maharaja himself took possession of all the valuable treasures and assets of the deposed chief and handed over the region to Dewan Mohkam Chand for its administration.[14]

Soon after the Maharaja's attention was diverted towards another adjoining state, Malerkotla, held by a Pathan chief, Ata-Ullah Khan from whom he demanded one lakh of rupees as tribute. Hard-pressed by this severe-demand, asking him to pay the amount beyond his means, the Khan could pay a part of this amount in cash and the remainder in kind. He also surrendered the fort of Jamalpur to the Sikh chief.

The next target in the Maharaja's itinerary was Ambala which he seized without any resistance from Rani Dya Kaur, the widow of Sardar Gurbaksh Singh. He also took possession of the jewels and treasures of the helpless Rani.

At Shahabad which the Maharaja captured, he received Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala with cordiality. Turbans were exchanged between the two Sikh chiefs at an impressive ceremony and a treaty of friendship was signed by them. They promised to help each other in the time of need and difficult situation, especially when the security of their states was threatened.

'The meeting between him and the Raja of Puteeala ended by an interchange of turbans and the conclusion of mutual engagements. The papers state that Sahib Singh had bound himself to join the other, whenever called on, against all enemies and to aid him in all his designs in every direction and that Ranjit Singh has engaged never to demand tribute from him, nor in any way injure him.'

'This proceeding, according to Ranjit Singh's usual policy would be a next step to the complete subjugation of Sahib Singh if the former is allowed to proceed unopposed.'[15]

The speedy incursions with remarkable success had established the fact that the Sikh ruler had more powerful military resources and an indomitable spirit with a clear-cut plan to subjugate the whole of the Cis-Sutlej region. The Maharaja was trying to make hay while the sun, and perhaps this was a propitious time. At any later stage, anybody could contest his claims and it would have been difficult for him to meet the challenge.

Charles Metcalfe informed Edmonstone on 30 October thus: 'Reverting to the object of his wishes the Rajah said that the only little doubt that remained in his mind proceeded from his not being able to conceive, why the Governor-General should hesitate to grant such a trifling request. He did not ask for any country from the British Government, he only wanted to be left to carry on his concern with the people of his own nation, his brethren without interference; that they all acknowledged his supremacy and that he merely wanted the Governor-General to say that he would not dispute what was acknowledged by all; that the British Government had given away territories yielding large revenues and was known to make great sacrifices to its friends, and that he was not able to account for the hesitation in complying with his small request. I remarked upon this that if the object of his request was trifling, the earnestness with which he pursued it was surprising and that if it was important he ought not to wonder that a certain degree of deliberation should take place upon it.'

'Much was said concerning the hostile temper of the chiefs of the army and the Maharaja's friends and intimates. I was carefully informed that they were always endeavouring to change the Raja's friendly disposition, and constantly used very improper language respecting the British Government and gave abuse to those who were employed in the negotiation. I remarked that those were certainly not the Raja's friends and that I was confident that he would take counsel from his own breast and ascertain his true interests and not attend to such advisers.'

'The Rajah acted the principal part in the discussions, frequently interrupting his ministers and explaining his views; During the interview, he had several consultations apart with the councillors. Not withstanding symptoms of anxiety and disappointment, his behaviour was perfectly correct and polite.[16]

Next day the British government at Fort William communicated to Maharaja Ranjit Singh:[17] The Justice and moderation of the British government are wellknown to you and to all the chiefs of India. When the Maharattas possessed the authority in the North of Hindostan, they exacted tribute from the Sikh chiefs on this side of the Sutlej and maintained them in subjection. When the British government succeeded

to that authority by the result of a war, in which it was compelled to engage for the defence of its dominions, being anxious to secure the attachment by promoting the welfare and prosperity of those chiefs, we relieved them from the payment of tribute and from every other demand, and left them in the uncontrolled possession of their respective territories. When, therefore the British government abstains from the exercise of its own rights of supremacy over these chiefs, for the express purpose of promoting their prosperity and securing their independence, how is it possible that it should encourage or permit the subjugation by another power.'

'I have further been led to apprehend from some circumstances which have been communicated to me by Mr. Metcalfe that listening to the idle representations of uninformed persons, you have suffered your mind to imbibe suspicion of the designs of the British government. This, if really the case, is above all things a subject of surprise to me and the bad reflection will show you that this suspicion is utterly devoid of foundation.'

'The British government entertains no designs against your territories. On the contrary it is the wish and the interest of this government to improve the relations of cordial friendship, mutual confidence and common interest between the two states and of this, I have afforded you the strongest proof by deputing a British gentleman of rank to your court charged with propositions, the object of which is to provide for the security of your territories against a great danger with which they are menaced.'

In spite of the efforts of the officials at Fort William and of the British envoy, the views of the Lahore chief were not favourable to the demands of the East India Company's government. He instead put forward a few demands which were referred to by Metcalfe to Edmonstone in his letter dated 6 November 1808. Metcalfe referred to his government the main demands put forward by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He wrote:

'Although my several despatches have detailed all the circumstances worthy of mention that have occurred in the progress of the negotiations with Ranjit Singh it will I conceive proper to state to you in a collected form all the proposals and the stipulations which he advances.

These are as follows:[18]

*First:*Some sort of Treaty of perpetual amity or connection to be continued with his heirs.

*Second:*The acknowledgement of his sovereignty over the whole Sikh country or an engagement not to oppose his aggressions against the independent Sikh chiefs and not to assist at any time Sikh chiefs against him.

*Third:*An engagement not to interfere in favour of the King of Cabul to prevent his aggressions against the king dominions.

*Fourth:*Engagement that when the British armies shall march through his country to meet the enemy on the Indus or in Cabul, the time of the march of the troops from Dihlee on the route of the march shall be willed with his convenience.

*Fifth:*Engagement that the arrangement for guarding the depots to be established in the Raja's territories shall be made with his concurrence.

*Sixth:*Engagement that the British forces shall evacuate his dominions after the termination of the contest with the French armies and that the depots shall be removed.

*Seventh:*Engagement that the misrepresentation of designing enemies shall not be attended to.

*Eighth:*Engagement that cattle shall not be killed for beef for the British armies in the Raja's country.

Ninth: Stipulation presented but subsequently withdrawn that the British government will never entertain any Sikhs in its services.'

Meanwhile, Metcalfe sent a detailed account of Ranjit Singh's incursions, the chiefs he brought under his sway and also his plan to go back to Amritsar. He stated.'[19]

'Ranjit Singh is about to return to Umritsur and Lahore. His guns and infantry have commenced their march to this quarter and he will follow after bathing at Tannesar and having a meeting with Rajah Sahib Singh.'

'Since his march from Malekotla, Ranjit Singh has stationed himself at Shahabad, a central position with reference to his purposes,

and has at that place received the submission of the chief of the vicinity.'

'The chief of Jagadree, Burea and Radawar have attended the Rajah at Shahabad and have paid contributions according to their means. The papers state that they have entered into engagements to furnish permanently a force for the Rajah's service and that they have delivered to him a written declaration acknowledging that they are his subjects and that they hold their possessions only by virtue of his grant. They have also been compelled to contribute some guns to his collection. He 'is said in return to have promised that they shall not again be put under contributions.'

'He has taken possession of the country of the unfortunate widow of the chief of Umbala. He has given small portions to some of his favourities. The papers say that he intends to keep the best part for himself and he has certainly hitherto rejected every application for it made in favour of the *Ranee* or by chief for themselves. He has seized all the valuable property in Umbala and converted it to his own use.'

These conditions under which Metcalfe was placed made him march along the route followed by the Sikh chief's army. On 27 November he communicated with Edmonstone:

'I intend to march tomorrow in the direction of Raja Ranjit Singh's camp which is distant from this place about eighty miles.'

'If the Rajah were to proceed immediately with his army beyond the Sutlej, a most important point would be gained without the chance of rupture or discussion for a period and without even a denunciation of that degree of seeming goodwill which may presently be supposed to assist between him and me. The arrangements of government might proceed gradually without the necessity of instantly communicating its resolution to the Raja and at the same time with every effect to be expected from the communication.'[20]

The British Resident in Delhi informed N.B. Edmonstone, on 11 Dec. 1808, 'The Putteealah newspaper of the 7th instant which I have just received, states that the troops had indeed reached Tenesser but that the Rajah himself was at Shahabad within a few miles of Tenessar and situated nearly midway between that place and Ambala.'

'It appears from the newspapers that Ranjit Singh is purusing his plan of depredatory and seizure of territory. Nor is his violence confided to such places as belong to those of his own tribe.'

'In thus oppressing a chief (Rehmut Khan of Koonjpooreh) who is wellknown to have conducted himself so meritoriously towards the British government, it would almost appear that Ranjit Singh is determined to ascertain with precision the length which that government will allow him to proceed with impunity since with his acuteness it cannot but be evident to him, that, though Rehmut Khan is not expressly under its protection, it could not see him annihilated, or even oppressed and humbled, without a sensation of plainful regret. Either, therefore, Ranjit Singh must make light of the displeasure of the British government or he wishes to force to a premature result, the point which is now in reference with our government. Be this as it may, I confess it appears to me that Raja Ranjit Singh's present conduct is not only the reverse of friendly, but highly objectionable should he take possession of Koonjpooreh, he will be almost within gun shot of the British Cantonment at Kurnaul.'

'The vicinity of Ranjit Singh to Delhi and the oppressive capacity of his character have naturally given rise to some degree of agitation in this city. In other times, and under any other government, it is not unlikely that under similar circumstances, the wealthy inhabitants would have prepared to remove their families and valuable effects. It would be most unfortunate if the preparation of any acts of intrigue, within our boundary by Ranjit Singh's troops weakened the confidence which now so happily prevails among the inhabitants of this frontier.'

'It is indeed true that he has not as yet committed any depredations within the British frontier. But considering the caprice and rapacity of his character and the restlessness of his habits, it might not be easy to answer for his forbearance and that of his people upon every future occasion of a sinister nature.'[21]

The British envoy was unhapply with the new conquests of the Maharaja since the arrival of the British mission and his advance towards Jamuna. He wrote a letter expressing his serious concern in this regard, to Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 6 January 1809.[22]

'I take the liberty to add that the immediate execution of all those requisitions by which I mean the restoration of the former possessions

of all places taken, and the redress of all those measures which have taken place since my arrival at the Rajah's court, will be conducive to the prosperity and happiness of both governments. On the subject of the military preparations of the Maharaja's government, I must candidly observe that the explanation given is by no means satisfactory. The Maharaja observes that such things are necessary in affairs of states....The Maharaja enquired of me the motive or the intention of the British government to station a force on the Sutlej and I gave him the fullest explanation on that point. If I were to imitate the Maharaja's example, it would be sufficient to say that it was an affair of state. The Maharaja also avoids every explanation of his military preparations by saying that his army and the British army are the same. It is remarkable that whilest he is pleased to speak in this manner of his own military preparations, he objects to the establishment of a British force on the Sutlej notwithstanding the full explanation that he had received on that subject.'

Charles Metcalfe also sent a short note to Edmonstone on 18 January 1809.[23] 'I acknowledge that what the Rajah had done in order to recall the troops from Umbala, evinced a disposition to accede to the arrangements proposed by the British government. I found it necessary, however to remind him that much remained to be done and to require the complete fulfilment of his engagement, and not being satisfied with his evasion of any explanation of his military preparations, I stated my opinion candidly on that point....But I had not the least intention of admitting any interference on his part prejudicial to the plan proposed. I informed him at the same time that no delay would take place in the advance of the detachment and urged the necessity of his immediate execution of his compliance with our requisitions in order that I might consult him without delay with respect to the detachment.'

Ranjit Singh crossed the Sutlej and marched to Amritsar along-with his forces. After two days, he was joined there by Charles Metcalfe. He stayed on in Amritsar to make direct contact with the local population. He even paid a visit to the Golden Temple, placed a generous offering before the Granth Sahib and gave expensive presents to the priests.

An Amritsar, Metcalfe presented a note to the Lahore chief containing an 'irrevocable demand' that all the territories east of the Sutlej that the Sikh chief had taken under his control since the arrival of the British mission, should be restored forthwith. The British envoy also informed the Maharaja that a British force was on its march towards Sultej.

Having come to the determination that Sultej should be the limit of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's acquisitions in that direction, the British government, in order to uphold its resolution, immediately commanded the advance of a sufficient body of troops under the command of Lt. Col. Ochterlony. He was the garrison commander at Allahabad and had already worked as Resident at Delhi, and thus he was fully equipped with an intimate knowledge of the politics, feuds and resources of the Cis-Sutlej States.

It was decided that the detachment to be advanced was intended to consist of two battalions of sepoys with a combination of cavalry and artillery.[24] Lt. Col. Ochterlony was duly imformed about the military action to be executed under his command.[25] Ochterlony was to compel Ranjit Singh's withdrawal from his late conquests. If any Lahore *Durbar* he was not to accept them for the time being but he should give them the verbal understanding that they would be given help in the future. It was also made obligatory for him to study the resources of the Sikh chiefs and also to know how they could be mobilised at a particular stage against Ranjit Singh.

In fact, it was done so to overawe the Sikh chief and compel him to give up his claims on the newly conquered areas in the Cis-Sutlej region. Ochterlony reached Ludhiana on 19 January 1809.

During this period, Charles Metcalfe noted that 'the Maharaja's military preparations had been carried on with the utmost possible activity.' They consisted in assembling troops from all quarters, in collecting ammunition and military stores, and in hastening the compeltion of storing and mounting guns in the new fort. The army which had been sent to assist Raja Sansar Chand against the Gurkhas had been recalled.

'....the Raja was determined to take precautions in view of the envoy's ambiguous attitude. He was ordering cavalry up to the Sutlej to join the Dewan.[26] Getting wind of this 'duplicity' and 'falsehood,'

Metcalfe was about to send his *munshi* to protest and declare his intention of leaving at once, when councillors came to propose that *vakils* of the Raja should be sent to Ochterlony's camp. Metcalfe grumbled but changed his mind and told his *munshi* only to ask an explanation of the Raja's 'duplicity.' The reply was that those troops had been previously despatched, and were now being recalled. Ranjit added a wish to be notified of Ochterlony's movements....Next day they met and Ranjit Singh expressed great alarm and anxiety respecting the advance of the division under the command of Major-General St. Leger. Metcalfe said this advance had only been due to the Raja's prevarications and was temporary.'[27]

These military preparations of the Maharaja and his frequent consulations with his chiefs showed his determination to put up a stiff resistance to the British in case his territory was attacked.

Thereafter the British government adopted a firm attitude. It decided to force Ranjit Singh to relinquish the territories under dispute. To claim their supremacy and control over the Sikh chiefs and other areas under various chieftains between Sutlej and Jamuna, the British government adopted a stiff policy and issued an official proclamation in this regard.

On 9 February 1809, David Ochterlony issued a proclamation which was as follows:

'The British army having encamped near the frontiers of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh, it has been thought proper to signify the pleasure of the British Government, by means of this precept, in order to make all the chiefs of the Maharaja acquainted with the sentiments of the British government, which have sloely for their object and aim to confirm the friendship with the Maharaja, and to prevent any injury to his country, the preservation of friendship between the two states depending on particular conditions which are hereby declared.

'The *Thanas* in the fortrees of Khur, Khanpur and other places on the side of the river Sutlej, which have been placed in the hands of the dependents of the Maharaja, shall be razed and the same places restored their ancient possessors.'

'The force of cavalry and infantry which may have crossed to this side of the Sutlej must be recalled to the other side, to the country of the Maharaja.'

'The troops stationed at the Ghat of Philour must march thence, and depart to the other side of the river as described, and in future and troops of the Maharaja shall never advance into the country of the chiefs situated on this side of the river, who have called in for their security and protection of *Thanas* of the British government: but if in the manner that the British have placed *Thanas* of moderate number on this side of Sutlej, if in like manner a small force by way of *Thanas* be stationed at the Ghat of Philour, it will not be objected to.'

'If the Maharaja persevere in the fulfilment of the above stipulation which he so repeatedly professed to do in presence of Mr. Metcalfe, such fulfilment will confirm the mutual friendship. In case of non-compliance with these stipulations, then shall it be plain that the Maharaja has no regard for the friendship of the British but, on the contrary, resolves on enmity. In such case the victorious British army shall commence every mode of defence.'

'The communication of this precept is solely with the view of publishing the sentiments of the British, and to know those of the Maharaja. The British are confident that the Maharaja will consider the contents of the precept as abounding to his real advantage, and as affording a conspicuous proof of their friendship, that with their capacity for war, they are also intent on peace.'

By March 1809, the attitude of the Governor-General towards the Cis-Sultej states changed. He wrote to the Secret Committee, 'Although as a general principle we cordially recognise the wisdom and the justice of abstaining from all interference in the contests, disputes and concerns of states with which we are unconnected by the obligations of alliance, and are fully convinced of the embarrassments and inconvenience of extending our protection to petty chieftains, who are unable to protect their territories from the aggressions of more powerful neighbours, yet we are disposed to think that cases may occur in which a temporary deviation from those general principles may be a measure of defensive policy, the neglect of which might be productive of much more danger and embarrassment than the certain resolution of the Rajah of Lahore to subjudgate the states situated between the Sutlege and the frontier of our dominion would, under other circumstances than the present, constitute a case on which on grounds of self-defence, the interposition of the British power, for the purpose

of preventing the execution of such a project, would be equally just and prudent.

'Ranjit had alone been induced to mediate the extension of his dominions over the territories between the Sutlege and the Jumna, by a manifestation of our intention not to exercise those rights of supremacy over the southern Sikhs which had been exercised by the Mahrathas. If we had not at any early period of time declared the Sikh chiefs to be entirely independent of our control; if at the time when the Rajah projected his first invasion of those territories we had declared a resolution to protect them; or even if we had attended to the united solicitation of the chiefs of these territories about the middle of last year to protect them against a second projected invasion, by announcing that resolution, no doubt can be entertained that the mere declaration, of it would have been sufficient to deter Ranjit Singh from the execution of his design.'[28]

The British envoy's regular reports in connection with his negotiations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh's incursions across the river Sutlej created doubts and sharp reaction at Calcutta. It thus became evident that there could be no final outcome under these circumstances. 'The envoy, felt angry and crestfallen, for the Maharaja's elusive tactics had narrowed down his schemes of superintending Central Asian politics to an occasional flippant reference to the Napoleonic menace, and to matters like protests over the desertion of the mission sepoys, court intrigues, theft of a few camels and other petty details.'

'There was something romantic in the encounter between the youthful Metcalfe and the adventurous Ranjit, and there has been some tendency, in retrospect which sentimentalise their relations. Metcalfe's despatches make it clear that there was no love lost between them. The envoy was always one of Wellesley's young men. His mission came near to paralleling that of Malcolm to Persia. He complained copiously of Ranjit Singh's faithlessness....He saw in the Raja a tyrant, whom, however he was able to criticise very freely in conversation with the Raja's own ministers. He underrated Ranjit.'

At this time, a military incident occurred at Amritsar in which an attack was made by the Akalis of the Golden Temple on the Muslim soldiers of Metcalfe's escort who had gathered for the Muharram celebration.[29] In this clash, the Akalis, under their renowned leader,

Sardar Phula Singh, were completely routed by the few sepoys of the escort. This defeat though minor appeared to have created a great impression on the Maharaja's mind. After this traumatic experience it appears that the Lahore chief realized the inadequacy of his resources compared to the East India Company's government and perceived that it would be a suicidal step to persist with fetish obstinacy for coping with the fast moving challenge of war. This explains why he gradually became eager for a treaty or alliance. He agreed to the demand for withdrawal of his troops from Ambala and its restoration to Rani Dya Kaur. But he evaded the demand for the restoration of other territories.[30]

At last at a meeting attended by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his council of ministers and Charles Metcalfe, the Lahore chief found no other way out but to abandon his pretensions. Although his stand in the dispute was not altogether baseless nor was the British demand justified, he reluctantly agreed to restore Faridkot, Khur and Khanpur to the original possessors under the pressure of circumstances. Consequently, he issued orders for the withdrawal of the principal part of his army from the left bank of the river and his army evacuated Faridkot on 2 April 1809.[31]

Undoubtedly a superb administrator, imbued with drive, energy, imagination, shrewdness and far-sightedness, Maharaja Ranjit Singh felt that his own position as the ruler in the Punjab was hardly established, because only a portion of it had so far come under his suzerainty, which, too, had not yet been fully consolidated. He had the genuine fear in his mind on account of his recent dealings in the form of his successive incursions that the pro-British faction consisting of some of the powerful and resourceful Sikhs chieftains of the Cis-Sutlej region, might shake off its allegiance to him at the time of emergency, and rise in rebellion against him with the help of the British and thus plan to topple his hard-earned ascendancy. Besides he was well-aware of the inexhaustible resources of the East India Company's government and considered it an act of folly to create permanent enemity with the British and thus expose his kingdom to imminent hazards.

During his stay in Punjab for a few months, Charles Metcalfe evinced intererest in the number, organisation, drill and discipline of

the Maharaja's army. The Sikh chief, he reported is 'devoted to military pursuits and passes great part of his time in reviewing and exercising his troops. He evinces anxiety to obtain a knowledge of the European system of discipline and introduce it as much as possible into his army.[32]

At certain occasions, during the negotiations, the Lahore chief did not see eye to eye with the British envoy over some issues, the solution of which was not considered favourable by the former. His seriousness over these issues and sometime evasive replies were tantamount to the dismissal of Metcalfe's mission. But Metcalfe bore this kind of attitude with calmness, forbearance and fortitude. It was probably so because he might have felt that the failure of his mission during that time would greatly harm British interests, and if that opportunity was lost, it would not have been possible to open such a dialogue in the near future. On the other hand, the success of mission, he knew would greatly strengthen the British position between Sutlej and Jamuna—an area which was most important both geographically and strategically for the East India Company's government.

The Treaty of Amritsar signed between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Charles Theophilus Metcalfe which greatly effected the Anglo-Sikh relations from 1809 to 1839, the year when the former died, contained a preamble and four clauses. It is an historic document having been agreed upon by an able, ambitious, shrewd, and successful Sikh chief with an ardent desire to subjugate the territories both in Trans and Cis-Sutlej regions on one side and by an expansionist East India Company's government with an unchallenged diplomatic and military power on the other side. The treaty contained the following four articles.

The preamble of the treaty signed on 25 April 1809 and ratified by the Governor-General-in-Council on 30 May, stated, 'Whereas certain differences which had arisen between the British Government and the Rajah of Lahore have been happily and amicably adjusted, and both parties being anxious to maintain the relations of perfect amity and concord, the following articles of Treaty, which shall be binding on the heirs and successors of the two parties, have been concluded by Rajah Ranjit Singh on his own part, and by the agency of Charles Theophilus Metcalfe Esquire, on the part of British Government.'

The Article I of the treaty clearly stated that, 'Perpetual friendship shall subsist between the British Government and State of Lahore. The latter shall be considered, with respect to the former, to be on the footing of the most favoured powers; and the British Government will have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Rajah to the northward of the River Sutlej.'

The Article II emphasised that, 'The Rajah will never maintain in the territory occupied by him and his dependents, on the left bank of the River Sutlej, more troops than are necessary for the internal duties of that territory, nor commit or suffer any encroachments on the possessions or rights of the chiefs in its vicinity.'

The Article III of the treaty put a seal of discipline on both the parties. 'In the exent of a violation of any of the preceding Articles, or of a departure from the rules of friendship on the part of either states, this Treaty shall be considered to be null and void.'

The Article IV made it clear that the treaty would be binding on both parties. 'This Treaty consisting of four Articles, having been settled and concluded at Amritsar on the 25th day of April 1809, Mr. Charles Theophilus Metcalfe has delivered to the Rajah of Lahore a copy of the same, in English and Persian, under his seal and signature and the said Rajah has delivered another copy of the same, under his seal and signature, and Mr. Charles Theophilus Metcalfe engages to procure, within the space of two months, a copy of the same duly ratified by the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in-Council, on the receipt of which by the Rajah, the present Treaty shall be deemed complete and binding on both parties, and the copy of it now delivered to the Rajah shall be returned.[33]

Thus, it was agreed upon by both the parties that perpetual friendship would subsist between the two governments; the East India Company's government undertook not to interfere in the Trans-Sutlej region and the Sikh chief would not encroach upon the states in the Cis-Sutlej region. It was also made clear that the treaty was to be considered null and void if either of the party violated any of these articles.

'For some mysterious reason, Ranjit attached special importance to the third and final clause, that if any part of the treaty were broken or there were a departure from the rules of friendship, the whole should

be null and void. In the true spirit of diplomacy, he tried to outreach Metcalfe by asking the Governor-General to omit this proviso. The Governor-General refused and told him he knew of his intrigues with Sindhia and Holkar. Nevertheless, the British would not withdraw from Ludhiana on the strength of the engagements he had now made.'[34]

The treaty is considered a most significant landmark so far as the Anglo-Sikh relations are concerned. It guaranteed security to the 'expanding' political and territorial interests of the East India Company's government in the region between Delhi and river banks on Phillaur *ghats* near Ludhiana and secured this area from the ambitious, expansionist and aggressive designs of the Lahore chief. Besides, the treaty made it difficult rather impossible for Maharaja Ranjit Singh to pursue his military incursions eastward.

The treaty marked the beginning of British influence and superior military power beyond the river Jamuna. This important aspect of British ambition could not be fulfilled so long as Ranjit Singh remained at the helm of affairs. 'This process was, however completed between 1839-49, hardly a decade after the Maharaja's demise, when two Anglo-Sikh wars were fought in the Punjab resulting into the clear victory for the British government and a dismal dismemberment of the governmental structure founded, built and well-maintained by the powerful Maharaja with the help of a well-disciplined and well-trained army and other resources.

Thus, this transaction afforded the British a good deal of confidence in the successful implementation of their astute diplomacy which was marked with a clear perception of realism. They realised that the turbulent Maharaja had been tamed, and with his amity, friendship and cooperation, it would be easy for them to face any foreign invasion from the western frontier. These were the important achievements, pregnant with deepest significance for the British, brought about by the fear of a probable French drive towards India by the overland route. Henceforth, the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh remained buffer state between British India and territories beyond the geographical frontier of Western India throughout the period of British involvements for establishing their ascendancy in other parts of the country and becoming an unchallenged power paramount in the vast sub-continent.

This treaty greatly effected Maharaja Ranjit Singh's cherished aim and desire to bring all the Cis-Sutlej chiefs under his banner. They were militarily weak and were no match to the superior resources of the Lahore chief who had subjugated almost the whole region between the two rivers. The treaty sealed once for all his military manoeuvres across the Sutlej and ended for ever his life-long dream of becoming the overlord of all the Sikh Chieftains and realizing the unfulfilled aspirations of Guru Govind Singh to unite the Sikh community into a solid, compact and homogeneous socio-political unit.

From this time onward, it was indeed not improbable that Maharaja Ranjit Singh began to feel the British ascendancy in the east as a hard reality. He signed the treaty under the pressure of highly compelling circumstances with a sense of unhappiness, anger and dissatisfaction in his heart. Considerably overcome by an intermixture of frustration, disappointment, resentment, alarm as well as suspicion, he could not decide for a while what subtle policy he should follow? However he remained fully vigilant on the right bank of the river Sutlej and maintained a well-trained military force all along it as a measure of security of his hard-built and small kingdom till he was convinced that the British would not cast a covetous eye on the Trans-Sutlej region. Soon after when the East India Company's government got itself involved into innumerable political complications and engaged itself in the struggle for political ascendancy, territorial and administrative consolidation, he reconciled himself to his fate and began to look to the north, west and south for satisfying his lust for territories.

It is, in fact, difficult to surmise how far these achievements were a compensation for the diplomatic defeat and a great loss of prestige, sustained by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809, and the permanent blockage, of his road to the east. Nevertheless, the diversion of his attention which might be regarded as a logical inevitability of the treaty of Amritsar was undoubtedly a new field of operation, But it cannot be treated as a gain to the Maharaja directly emanating from this treaty and hence it is difficult to admit that in this respect, the treaty proved useful to him.

The only point worth considering is that the treaty secured his western border from any future British encroachments and thus

prevented the possibilities of a clash of the ambitions of the Lahore chief and the British government on the eastern bank of the river Sutlaj.

In fact, the treaty postponed that eventuality for about thirty-five years and thus afforded an opportunity to the Sikh chief to consolidate and strengthen his military hold on the Trans-Sutlej region. However the treaty of Amritsar led to the development of cordial and friendly relations between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the British government, though it never became a source of positive gain to him. On the contrary, his southward drive too was discouraged by Lord William Bentinck.

To establish its firm control over the Cis-Sutlej states, the British government issued a second proclamation on 3 May 1809. It stated as follows:

'It is clearer than the sun, and better proved than the existence of yesterday that the marching of a detachment of British troops to this side of the river Sutlej was entirely at the application and earnest entreaty of the several chiefs, and originated solely from friendly considerations in the British government, to preserve them in their possessions and independence. A treaty having been concluded on the 25th of April 1809, between Mr. Metcalfe on the part of the British Government and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, agreeably to the orders of the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in-Council, I have the pleasure of publishing for the satisfaction of the chiefs of the country of Malwa and Sirhind, the pleasure and resolutions of the British Government, as contained in the seven following Articles.

Article I. 'The country of the chiefs of Malwa and Sirhind having entered under the British protection, they shall in future be secured from the authority and influence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, conformably to the terms of the treaty.

Article II. All the country of the chiefs thus taken under protection shall be exempted from all pecuniary tribute to the British government.

Article III. The chiefs shall remain in the full exercise of same rights and authority in their own possessions which they enjoyed before they were received under the British protection.

Article IV. Should a British force, on purposes of general welfare, be required to march through the country of the said chiefs, it is necessary and incumbent that every chief shall, within his own possession, assist and furnish, to the full, his power, such force with supplies of grain and other necessaries which may be demanded.

Article V. Should an enemy approach from any quarter for the purpose of conquering this country, friendship and mutual interest require that the chiefs join the British army with all their force, and, exerting themselves in expelling the enemy, act under discipline and proper obedience.

Article VI. All European articles brought by merchants from the eastern district for use of the army shall be allowed to pass by the Thanadars and Seyedars of the several chiefs, without molestation and the demand of duty.

Article VII. 'All horses purchased for the use of cavalry regiments, whether in the district of Sirhind or elsewhere, the bringers of which being provided with sealed 'Rahdaries' from the Resident at Delhi or officer commanding at Sirhind shall be allowed to pass through the courtesy of the said chiefs without molestation or the demand of duty.'

This treaty secured the Cis-Sutlej chiefs from mutual interference, and was thus responsible for she safety of three *i.e.* Patiala, Nabha and Jind from extinction. But after sometime, the chiefs of Cis-Sutlej states began to prey upon each other Feuds and quarrels ensued over smaller issues, mainly territorial in nature. In fact; the territorial limits of some states in this region were not well-defined.

The Cis-Sutlej was divided among the ruling families of Patiala, Nabha and Jind and several other less important Sikh chiefs. Most of these chiefs had descended originally from the Phulkian *misl.* Another *misl,* the Nishanwala possessed some territory between Ambala and Saharanpur. Only one small state *i.e.* Malerkotla, was governed by an Afghan ruler.

This state of affairs led Metcalfe to believe that their mutual aggressions would not be checked unless active intervention into their internal affairs was sought and their mutual relations were clearly defined. To Metcalfe such an intervention appeared to be inevitable.

'I do not perceive how this interference can be avoided without producing still greater evils than those which attend it. Yet we consider the necessity to be unfortunate, for it alarms all the chiefs and makes them apprehensive that our interference will gradually extend itself till it reaches to every part of internal administration of their dominion.'

In order to strengthen its control over the Cis-Sutlej states, another proclamation of protection to their chiefs against one another was issued by the British government on 22 August 1811 and it was sent 'for the information and assurance of the protected chiefs of the plains between the Sutlej and Jamuna' on the same day. The contents of the proclamation were as follow:

'On the 3rd of May 1809, an *Etlanama* comprised of seven Articles was issued by the British government purporting that the country of the Sardars of Sirhind and Malwa having come under their protection, Raja Ranjit Singh, agreeably to treaty, had no concern with the possessions of the above Sardars; that the British Government had no intention of claiming *Peishkush* or *Nazrana* and that they should continue in the full control and enjoyment of their respective possessions. The publication of the above *Etlanama* was intended to afford every confidence to the Sardars that the protection of the country was the sole object, that they had no intention control, and that those having possessions should remain in full and complete enjoyment thereof.

'Whereas, several *zamindars* and other subjects of the chiefs of this country have preferred complaints to the officers of the British Government who having in view the tenor of the above *Etlanama* have not attended, and will not in future pay attention to then; for instance, on the 15th of June 1811, Delawar Ali Khan of Samana complained to the Resident of Delhi against the officers of Raja Sahib Singh for jewels and other property said to have been seized by them, who, in reply, observed, that the 'Cusba of Samana being in the Amildari of Raja Sahib Singh, his complaint should be made to him' and also, on the 12th of July 1811, Dussowndha Singh and Gurmukh Singh complained to Colonel Ochterlony, Agent to the Governor-General, against Sardar Charat Singh, for their shares of property; and in reply, it was written on the back of their *arzi*, 'that since' during the period of three years, no claim was preferred against Charat Singh by any of

his brothers, nor even the name of any co-partner mentioned; and since it was advertised in the *Etlanama* delivered to the Sardars, that every chief should remain in the quiet and full enjoyment of his domains, the petition should not be attended to'—the insertion of these answers to complaints is intended as examples, and also that it may be impressed on the minds of every *zamindar* and other subject, that the attainment of justice is to be expected from their respective chiefs only, that they may not, in the smallest degree, swerve from the observation of subordination. It is, therefore highly incumbent upon the Rajas and other Sardars of this side of the river Sultej, that they explain this to their respective subjects and court their confidence, that it may be clear to them that complaints to the officers of the British government will be of no avail, and that they consider respective Sardars as the source of justice, and that, of their free will and accord, they observe uniform obedience.

'And, whereas according to the first proclamation, it is not the intention of the Sardars of this country, it is nevertheless, for the purpose of ameliorating the condition of the community, particularly necessary to give general information, that several Sardars have, since the last incursion of Raja Ranjit Singh, wrested the estates of others and deprived them of their lawful possessions, and that in the restoration, they have used delays until detachments of the British army have been sent to effect restitution, as in the case of the Rani of Terab, the Sikhs of Cholian, the Talukas of Kaorwley and Chehloundy, and village of Chiba; and the reason of such delays and evasions can only be attributed to the temporary enjoyment of the revenues of subjecting the owners to irremediable losses. It is, therefore by order of the British Government, hereby proclaimed that if any one of the Sardars or others has forcibly taken possession of the estates of others, or otherwise injured the lawful owners, it is necessary that before the occurrence of any complaint, the proprietor should be satisfied, and by no means to defer the restoration of the property, in which, however should delays be made and the interference of the British authority become requisite, the revenues of the estate from the date of ejection of the lawful proprietor together with, whatever other losses the inhabitants of that place may sustain from the march of troops, shall without scruple be demanded from the offending party; and for disobedience of the present

orders, a penalty according to the circumstances of the case and of the offender shall be levied, agreeably to the decision of the British government.'

'The Treaty of Amritsar was a grievous blow to Ranjit Singh's dream of a unified Punjab. Although for the rest of his life he professed friendship for the English nation, this friendship was strongly tinged with fear of their might. It is strange that despite the experience of dealing with Metcalfe, Ranjit Singh seldom distrusted the word of an Englishman."[35]

'Ranjit Singh's decision to wink at all infractions of treaty was, however justified in the peculiar circumstances of that day. His military resources, despite all the efforts he had put into expanding and improving them and particularly into the modernization, were not adequate for him to jeopardize his eastern front, secured by the Anglo-Sikh treaty. Any chances that he may have taken in this direction would have been sure to embolden the turbulent spirits in the north-west to exploit the situation to aggrandize themselves. Even more important than that consideration was the presumption that his own people across the Sutlej would not be on his side in the struggle, and might even he expected to pull their weight against him.'

The Maharaja indeed very well understood the need of a compromise. His 'One eye could measure within a fraction of an inch all that he could take—all that he could keep.'

Indeed the Maharaja was not yet in a position to resist the British. His army was not well-disciplined compared to well-trained and well-disciplined army of the British. Besides his conquests not were well-consolidated as yet, and obviously, it was feared that taking advantage of his difficulties, the 'half-conquered' chieftains and tribes might break out in rebellions against him and thus make his position weak.

This treaty was tantamount to a confession of defeat on the part of Ranjit Singh. Henceforth, he was to be the ruler of a considerable fragment of the Sikhs but not of all the Sikhs. 'To one friendship, the Maharaja remained ever constant, from one alliance he never sought to shake himself free. This was the friendly alliance with the British

government.' And this was all due to the fact that the Maharaja was conscious of his own strength and weakness; and of the corresponding strength of the British.

After the treaty, Ranjit Singh conquered Multan, Jhang, Kashmir, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Peshawar and the plains of the Punjab and the region between Lahore and Sind. If the East India Company's government had remained unfriendly and hostile, Ranjit Singh would have to keep a major portion of his well-equipped army on the banks of the Sutlej and this factor would have affected his financial resources; it would have been difficult for him to lay hands on the region up to the Indus and also other areas up to Khyber. 'It was because of this Treaty that the Sikhs were enabled not only to drive the Pathans across the Indus but also to carry fire and sword into 'heir country as far as Jamrud.'

Captain Wade commented, 'Ranjit Singh has hitherto derived nothing but advantage from his alliance with us, while we have been engaged in consolidating our power in Hindustan, he has been extending his conquests throughout the Punjab and across the Indus, and as we are now beginning to prescribe limits to his power, which cannot be supposed he will regard with complacency, he is now more likely to encourage than to withdraw from alliance which may hold out to him a hope of creating a balance of power.'

The full agreement and the acceptance of the clauses of the treaty by the Lahore chief was indeed a clear check on his growing ambition for conquering more and more areas in the Punjab, especially in the Cis-Sutlej region. In this transaction, he felt that he was left with no alternative but to yield to the diplomatic and military power of the East India Company's government shown by Charles Metcalfe and Ochterlony. This was in fact a great check on his aim of expansion towards Delhi.

But it goes to the credit and far-sightedness of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that he saved himself, his kingdom and, above all, his people from untimely, sudden and well-planned annihilation from British whose only aim in the first decade of the the nineteenth century was to grab as much territory and political power as it was feasible within the framework of the dictates of the Court of Directors and the policy pursued by the Governor-General in India. He obviously secured his

state from the hammer-like onslaughts of the British from 1809 till his death in 1839.

Some historians have criticised Ranjit Singh for his yielding attitude towards the British and the failure of his policies so far as the British were concerned. The British now shifted nearer to his borders, watched his strength and weakness with a discerning eye, and, in fact, sought for an opportune moment to strike hard, whenever found convenient.

Although Metcalfe's mission failed to engage Ranjit Singh in a defensive alliance, it in fact obtained information about the resources and strength of the Kingdom of Lahore as well as the striking power of the Maharaja.

'The frontier on the Sutlej was a guarantee of peace with the British; it also provided a guarantee of British recognition to the powerful and independent Sikh State which he had built up.'

It was indeed a bitter pill that Ranjit Singh had to swallow. It was, in fact, a sort of defeat of the Sikh chief in the game of diplomacy. And in this game, the superiority of British diplomacy was recognised as a fact by the Maharaja.

This treaty brought the British too near the state of Lahore. The British had their sway into the heart of the Punjab and it became quite easy for them to acquaint them selves with the geography of the Punjab and the economic resources and political affairs in the Trans-Sutlej region controlled by Ranjit Singh. With these advantages it was not difficult for the British to devise means of subjugating the whole of Punjab after the death of the Maharaja in 1839 when he was succeeded by week successors.

It was a serious blow to the growing dream of Ranjit Singh for a compact and unified Punjab. 'Malwa was for ever cut off from the rest of the country. Malwai chieftains resumed their favourite pastime of bickering and intrigue; the British government discovered that what they needed more than protection against the *Durbar* was protection against each other.'[36]

The Maharaja's cherished desire of uniting all the Sikhs—both of Majha and Malwa—met a dismal failure. It became now impossible for him to knit them into a single political union.

This treaty, however failed to create complete confidence, trust and faith in both the parties. It left behind a legacy of mutual distrust. The spies were let loose to carry on espionage in each others' territorial jurisdictions. Consequently, Ranjit Singh strengthened his frontier-posts at Phillaur, opposite Ludhiana and at Gobindgarh in the years to come.

In his relations with the East India Company's government which has safely established its sway up to the banks of river Sutlej near Ludhiana, almost the heart of Punjab and strategically the best place for it, the Maharaja was 'all hesitancy and indecision.' He indeed had clearly realised that one day war with the British was certain. But he showed a sense of indecision by postponing it to some future date and thus did not act in a bold fashion. The result of this kind of hesistancy and indecision was that when the Maharaja died in 1839, the British took full advantage of the weaknesses that had seeped into the body politic of the administrative set up of the Punjab during the nest decade.

Ranjit Singh, seems to have been convinced that it would have added more to his strength than expansion elsewhere: for his anxiety to reach the Jamuna made him oblivious of the advantages of leaving a buffer between himself and the Company—though he may have believed that if the Company protected the Cis-Sutlej chiefs now, it would soon annex them, and no buffer would be left.'

All his life Ranjit Singh never lost sight of the fact that in resources and manpower, the British East India Company's government had no equal, that though, his soldiers who were well-trained by the French had Italian commanders, enjoyed some kind of superiority, yet in terms of discipline and general efficiency which marked the traits of a reputed defence force, his army could not come up to the standard attained by the English at that time.

Under such circumstances, when in 1820 the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur requested him for help, Ranjit Singh, turned a deaf ear to him. After four years, in 1824, when the government of Nepal sought his co-operation by signing a defensive alliance, the Maharaja showed his reluctance to do so. Similarly, when the British attacked the fort of Bharatpur, the Raja, finding himself helpless, approached Ranjit Singh for help. But the latter refused to extend any kind of military assistance against the British.

By nature and temperament, the Lahore chief was too wary to fall into any kind of political snare that might be little his growing reputation and fame as a ruler. It was in fact difficult to prevail upon him to agree to an alliance which might cripple him. He therefore, sought to play a safe game which should not land him into trouble in the near future.

The Maharaja made a questionable omission in not measuring his strength with the Company's government during his own life time. It is often said, 'All causes that were not the cause of Rome were destined to be lost. The central power, once dominant, could only grow and all the outside forces could only shelter themselves against Rome as enemies or augment the strength of Rome as vassals.'

Charles Metcalfe, on his part, acted well as a diplomat. During his negotiations, he replied to the difficult and ticklish queries of the Maharaja with tact, sobriety and wisdom. In this way, the British envoy endeavoured, in conformity to the instructions of the supreme government, to alarm the Raja for the safety of his territories, and at the same time, to give him confidence in our protection.'

'Lord Wellesley arrived in India in the darkest hour of the fierce Anglo-French struggle, when he was invading Egypt and contemplating Asiatic conquests, and when, at home, a powerful Tory Ministry was governing by measures that would be described as arbitrary coercion. At such a period, the intrigues of the French in India had naturally reached their high watermark and the opposition from the Indian powers reached an unprecedented level, which had forced upon him the necessity of disarming or dethroning them....He had fully realized that India had been drawn into the vortex of European politics as such Indian politics must imperatively be dictated by the needs of the situation in Europe. To Lord Wellesley's statesmanship must be attributed to the triumphant emergence of the British from a crucial struggle at the most critical stage in the whole period of Anglo-French rivalry.'[37]

When the new Governor-General, Lord Minto landed at Calcutta on 3 July 1807, a serious danger of an attack from north-west on British possession in India was apprehended. 'It was an established fact that the practicability of an overland invasion of India by France

depended entirely upon the assistance of the Governments of Persia and Turkey. It was also certain that the position of Persia to a French army would effectively obstruct its progress, while it was probable that the project would never be attempted till the support of that power had been secured. The inevitable effect of this was to fix the attention of the English administration in India upon the north-west corner of India. Both Persia and Turkey were, therefore to be warned against the evils of a connection with France and the injury to which they would be exposed from the consequent hostility of the British Government.'

The French war plans on India in 1807-08 were over estimated by the British statesmen in India as well as the home government. The military and diplomatic measure adopted in future led to the reversal of British policy in the Cis-Sutlej region and also to the adoption of a more vigorous attitude towards the Sikhs.

In fact, Nepoleon's eastern-policy was never characterised by either consistency or clarity of vision. His ideas and planning in this connection were vague and not firm. It is quite evident from the fact that they took different shapes at different times and contained elements entirely contradictory in their essence.

At one time, Napoleon made a plan of having a friendly military alliance with the Turkish empire and Persia against no less a power than Russia. But the strange phenomenon of flexibility in his thinking made him after this programme and he began to think of an alliance with Russia, Turkey and Persia against the East India Company's government in India. He also planned to have an alliance with Russia and Persia against both Turkey and the British in India. But he could not experience a smooth sailing in such alliances. It was obvious that traditional enmity between, Turkey and Persia, between Russia and Turkey, and between Persia and Russia made it impossible to forge any stable system of alliance with either Turkey and Persia or with Russia and Turkey or with Persia and Russia. 'In trying to use these powers on his chessboard to serve his own purpose for the moment Napoleon could never understand that these Powers also could be interested in their own objectives.'

Lord Minto, by his deplomatic intervention, managed to compel him to withdraw his army from all conquests that Ranjit Singh had

made in Cis-Sutlej region and also recognise that they were under the control of the British government.

Undoubtedly, the Maharaja had the superb qualities of a born ruler. 'Men obeyed him by instinct and because they had no power to disobey. The control which he exercised, even in the closing years of his life, over the woole Sikh people, nobles and priests, was the measures of his greatness.'

Ranjit Singh possessed many talents of head and heart and was very popular amongst his people. His subjects loved and respected him. 'Although half a century has passed since his death, his name is still a household word in the province: his portrait is still preserved in castle and cottage. It is a favourite subject with the ivory painters of Amritsar and Delhi.'

The Maharaja was an excellent horseman and an accomplished swordsman. Indeed, he was strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring. Besides, he had a remarkable capacity for work and remained busy from more till late in the evening. He followed the principle of Sher Shah. 'It behaves the great to be always active.' Endowed with an indefatigable capacity for work, he always led a very active and hectic life.

The Lahore chief was a remarkable ruler who led his men in many fierce battles and faced dangers without even caring for the safety of his life. These qualities of fearlessness rightly earned him the title of the 'Lion of the Punjab.'

Ranjit Singh has been described as the very 'embodiment of practical sagacity despite unlettered ignorance.' Like Akbar, he always sought the company of scholars and learned persons from whom he learnt numerous new technique of administration and about his own country and the world. He could speak Persian language in which the official records were kept.

'Ranjit Singh had given cause to people to realize that with his one eye he could see far more quickly and surely than any of his contemporaries with a pair of them. From visual proof they had come to know that his hand had grown so swift at the draw that his flashing steel dealt deadly strokes before the enemy knew what was happening? His aim was unerring, he hit hard and, endowed with lion—like courage, no odds were too great to daunt him.'

Ranjit Singh was a shrewd administrator and a great statesman. His political sagacity is quite evident in his maintaining cordial and friendly relations with the British whose resources and military power were unchallenged in the nineteenth century. The Maharaja had realized that the British were 'safe friends and very dangerous foes' and he, therefore, did not expose his kingdom to the risks of war so long as he remained at the help of affairs.

He achieved a remarkable success in securing the support of all sections of his people—Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims—who could 'defend the Northwestern frontier against a powerful Afghanistan and unruly border tribes and administer it successfully....She (India) would also have lost the Northwestern Frontier region, the Punjab and Kashmir but for the rise of the Sikhs and the consolidation of Ranjit's sway in those region. It is a certainty that if the disorganized *misls* had retained their hold over the Punjab, at least the Northwestern Frontier region and Kashmir would have become a part of Afghanistan under the Barakzais.'

His greed for dominion is too wellknown. It had always been his ardent desire to have a huge army, a large dominion, subservient people under him and huge resources to carry on the administration. In achieving all this, he undoubtedly achieved a marvellous success.

Ranjit Singh's 'career was naturally one long appropriation clause as is the career of empire—builders in all climes and in all ages....Political parochialism and local dynasticism were almost insuperable barriers....Caution, discerning, conciliatory, depending more on diplomacy than on force, he was more unscrupulous than cruel. Most of those chiefs whom he dispossessed—and the list is very long—found to their relief their conqueror was willing to give them sufficient *jagir* to maintain them in comfort and even high rank in state service if they were willing to serve him.'

The British relations with the Lahore chief remained satisfactory till 1823. Between 1809-23, the East India Company's government made itself very busy in its own affairs. On the other the Sikh chief was also engaged in his programme of territorial expansion. Whereas, the former was busy in curbing the power of the Nepalese, Marathas and the Rajputs, the Jatter devoted his full attention in conquering

Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar, Derajat and some regions in the hilly terrain.

'Both the parties, it may be repeated, were busy elsewhere and naturally in spite of suspicion and watchfulness in some matters Cis-Sutlej continued to give freshness and beauty to the emblematic garden of their friendship and continued its fertilising way to the ocean separating yet uniting the realms of two brotherly powers.'

The position, however changed with the crushing defeat of the Maratha confederacy. As a result of it, the British became the paramount power in India, east of the Punjab and Sind. As Cunningham puts it 'Ranjit had become master of the Punjab unheeded by the English.'

The Maharaja sensibly felt the great danger from the British after the treaty of Amritsar when they had established their border-line on the other said of river Sutlej. This nightmare made him realise the fact that one day the British would be in a position to capture the whole of the Punjab, *i.e.*, *sab lal ho jaye ga.* And his prophecy proved true at a time when there was no strong ruler in the Punjab after his demise in 1839.

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6

The Anglo-Sikh Relations

(A) TILL 1809

Ranjit Singh had a very strong desire to unite whole of Punjab under his banners, and this could be possible only if he occupied Cis-Sutlej States. But here the affairs were more complicated than he could expect. A short study of his relations with English till 1809 will justify the remarks.

As late as till fifties of the 18th century, we learn that English had a very slight knowledge of Sikhs. Franklin wrote then that the "Sikhs are in their persons tall,...their aspect is ferocious, and their eyes piercing;...they speak the language of Afghans;...their collected army amounts to 250,000 men, a terrific force, yet from want of union not much to be dreaded."[1] This was an estimate of the Sikhs when Ranjit Singh had not yet been born.

A more judicious observance of Sikhs was, however made only by Forster in 1783, when he estimated more surely the real character of Sikhs, and prophecied that an able chief would one day probably attain to absolute power on the ruins of the rule commonwealth. Warren Hastings, the founder of British empire in India, although far off from the regions of Punjab as yet, advised his government in 1784 to take "reasonable means of opposition....not to permit the (Sikh) people to grow into maturity without interruption." It was a clear writing on the wall, therefore, that Ranjit Singh was not going to have very good circumstances on the East.

The first direct contact between English and the Sikhs was established in 1800. The principle of the British policy towards Sikhs at this time seems to have been one of making the growing Sikh state

of Ranjit Singh, a buffer State between English and Russia, who was developing her ambitions in the Middle East. Russia could contact Persia and Afghanistan and attack India, and in 1771 Gen. Barker had already written to Jhanda Singh Bhangi: "It is clear that as the Khalsa army is on the watch, no one can march on Hindustan unopposed." Moreover the British were desirous that if at all a war had to be fought with Russia, that should be fought only in Punjab or beyond that if possible. The British were harbouring yet another apprehension in their mind. They had not yet consolidated their power in India, where the people, more specially the Muslims, being anxious to throw off their yoke could easily be exploited of Russians and Afghans, if they occupied Punjab.

After capturing greater part of Northern and Southern India, more particularly after Anglo-Oudh treaty of friendship, English had naturally to turn their attention towards the Northwestern frontiers. Under Lord Wollesely in 1800, a definite opportunity had offered itself when India was threatened by an invasion of Zaman Shah the Afghan ruler, who had been invited by Sultan Tipu, a bitter enemy of the British. As a precautionary measure the British sent Munshi Yusof Ali to the court of Ranjit Singh, with big presents, to request him not to help Zaman Shah in case of his invasion. Soon, however we learn, the danger of Zaman Shah's invasion receded and Yusof Ali was called back by the British.

This was the first Anglo-Sikh acquaintance of which the historians do not seem to have taken much notice.

Second Contact 1805

Towards the beginning of the 19th century, the conflict between the two giants, English and the Marathas, for supremacy in India, had sharpened. Both of the two Maratha chiefs, Mahad Ji Scindia and Jaswant Rai Holkar, had developed their influence far and wide, but none of them was a match to the seasoned British diplomacy. When the contest between the two powers developed, both the Maratha chiefs requested Ranjit Singh's help against the English. At first it was Scindia who, after extending his way over the regions north of Delhi, contacted the Sikhs through his French generals Peron and Bourquin. But Ranjit Singh was too shrewd a man to do more than what his

capabilities permitted for? Soon after, Scindia was defeated by the English, and his power was exterminated from the political field.

With Jaswant Rao Holkar, however the story was different. Although the Maratha chief was defeated by the English at Dig and Ferrukhabad by Gen. Lake, yet real complications arose when Holkar field to Punjab and requested for Ranjit Singh's help. This happened in 1805. Gen Lake wrote to Ranjit Singh forthwith that if he did so he would be responsible for the consequences. For a time Ranjit Singh was undecisive and to consult some other important Sikh chiefs, he called a meeting of the Gurmata at Amritsar.[2] Majority of those who were present in the meeting, and particularly the chiefs such as Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, advised Ranjit Singh not to spoil his relations with the English, which he accepted.

Although a sort of understanding between English and Holkar had also been reached on 24th December 1805, yet on 1st January 1806, General Lake signed an agreement with Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh jointly which provided that Ranjit Singh would Holkar to retire from Amritsar, and would not give him any help. The soldiers of the Maratha chief, who had been defeated by the English at Ferrukhabad and Dig, were, it was learnt, discouraged and wanted to go back to their country. Ranjit Singh was not only to permit them go but also would give them facilities and encouragement to wards this direction.

On the other hand it was laid down that the British would withdraw their forces from Punjab and also that they would not permit the Maratha chief to molest Punjab regions. The British would never attack the territory of Ranjit Singh if he remained friendly towards them. According to Latif, Ranjit Singh himself proposed beside this, that, the British could have their control over the Cis-Sutlej regions if they liked. Ranjit Singh would not intervene.

Chief importance of this treaty says Payne, was that it brought English in a regular contact with the Sikhs. Now the ground was cleared for the further development of the Anglo-Sikh relations.

Different comments have been forwarded on this alliance of Ranjit Singh. It is said that this was a golden opportunity for Ranjit Singh, who should have helped Holkar crush the English and thus exterminate their power. But those who criticise the agreement on this score do not seem to realise that at this time Ranjit Singh's

was an infant State, which he could not afford to put to any risk. Nor was he ignorant of the fundamental principle of political strategy that Punjab should not become a battlefield between English and the Marathas. Moreover, "what Ranjit Singh heard then from the Marathas, and what he saw of the disciplined strength of the British army, made a deep impression upon him,[3] and he realised that friendly relations with such a power would pay him better than called for enemity. Nor could Ranjit Singh's alliance with Holkar be of much use because the latter had thoroughly been weakened by the English. The chief Sardars of Ranjit Singh's court were also not favourably inclined towards Sikh—Maratha alliance. Ranjit Singh "was dissuaded from this step, which would have at once brought him into collision with the English, by his advisors Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and the Raja of Jind."[4] Moreover, says Payne had the Marathas established their power in Delhi, they being highly ambitions themselves, Ranjit Singh's consolidation in Punjab would have been impossible. And yet more, Holkar was not a reliable man and in his private consultations with his advisors, "Ranjit Singh called him pukka haramzada[5] whose ambition was only to look and plunder and nothing else.

Cis-Sutlej Relations

Now turning to the Cis-Sutlej affairs, major portion of Cis-Sutlej area, we learn, was under the Phulkian family, which was one of the most powerful of the original twelve Sikh confederacies, comprising of the States of Patiala, Jind and Nabha. Its founder was one Phul Singh a Jat of ancient "lineage connected with Jesulmeer in the Rajputana desert," writes J.H. Gordon. Phul built a village in 1640, calling it after his name. He was patronised by the emperor of Delhi. "He embraced the Sikh religion, and his seven sons became the ancestors of the reigning families of Patiala, Jind and Nabha. Other minor families sprang from them, all attaining to wealth and power.[6] Of all these states, the State of Patiala was the largest and the strongest. It had seen its palmy days under Baba Ala Singh, the grandson of Chaudhri Phul Singh. After the death of Ala Singh, his grandson Amar Singh came to power in 1765, and it was under him that this state became the strongest state in Cis-Sutlej areas. He was given the title of Raja-i-Rajgan Bahadur' by Ahmad Shah Abdali. But the present ruler, Sahib Singh, who succeeded his father Amar Singh at the age

of seven, was weak, and the State under him fell to its wretched days. Sahib Singh was always in conflict with his own wife Aus Kaur of which the other states of Nabha and Jind wanted to take an advantage. Nor was the condition of the peasantry less pitiable in these regions. Sunk in their political intrigues and games, the rulers seemed to have little time to think of the agricultural developments of the country. There was no trade or industry which could enrich the resources of the states. All around there was a confusion and dissatisfaction, of which English, Marathas and Ranjit Singh were out to take an advantage.

In 1806, there seemed to have been an understanding between the English and the Sikhs that cis-Sutlej States could go under the protection of the former. General Lake on his way to Lahore, while pursuing Holkar, had been well received by the cis-Sutlej chiefs, in return for which, after the Anglo-Sikh agreement, Lord Lake gave them many territorial rewards and now began to develop intimate relations with them. But this policy of intervention beyond Jumna was not liked by the Directors of the Company at home, and it had soon to be abandoned before the English relations with these states would be regularised. This policy of non-intervention continued for sometime, which gave encouragement to Ranjit Singh to proceed on his mission in these regions.

In 1806, there was a quarrel between Patiala and Nabha on a small town so Doladhi. When they could not decide the dispute between them, the Raja of Nabha alongwith the Raja of Jind appealed to Ranjit Singh to decide the dispute. Ranjit Singh was already in search of such opportunities, and marched towards cis-Sutlej areas immediately, alongwith Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and others like Gurdit Singh Ladwe. He brought with him a force of 20,000 soldiers too big of course, for the problem he was invited to solve; and instead of deciding the dispute between the states, he invaded and occupied the town of Doladhi himself. He also realised a big nazrana from Patiala.

On his return Ranjit Singh conquered Ludhiana, Dakha, Raikot, Jagraon and Ghungrana, but distributed those territories among the friends who accompanied him.

In 1807 Ranjit Singh found another opportunity to march in the cis-Sutlej regions. This time there was a quarrel between Aus Kaur,

the queen of Patiala and her husband. She wanted to secure a good jagir for her minor son Karam Singh, which her husband would not permit. She invited Ranjit Singh to intervene on her behalf with a promise that if the dispute was decided in her favour, she would give him a valuable necklace and the famous brass-gun called 'Khuri-Khan.' Ranjit Singh of course accepted the invitation. But before he crossed the Sutlej, the husband and wife, according to some writers, had already patched up their affairs, but despite that he forced his reward out of the queen.[7]

From Patiala, this time, Ranjit Singh proceeded towards Ambala, from whose chief Rani Daya Kaur, he realised a tribute. He also occupied Naraingarh which after conquest was handed over to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. He also realised a tribute from Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, from Jodh Singh of Kalsia and many other Sardars and Zamindars a long list of whom is given by Dewan Amar Nath. Among these chiefs, those of Mani Majra and Ropar were important. Ranjit Singh also occupied Wadni, Zira and Kot Kapura. Zira was given to Muhkam Chand and Wadni in Ferozepur to Sada Kaur, his mother-in-law.

This naturally produced dismay among the chiefs of cis-Sutlej States. They held a conference among themselves and went to Mr. Seton, the British resident at Delhi appealing him for British protection against Ranjit Singh. Their argument was that the cis-Sutlej regions had always been protected by Delhi government, and now since Delhi was itself under the English protection, the English should extend their protecting hand on their states as well. But this was the time when Mr. Seton could give them on definite assurance for British help, however willing he might have been to extend the British influence towards this side.

Thus writes Mr. Latif, the English did wish "to limit the ambition of the Maharaja to the north of the Sutlej. But at the same time...they were afraid of thwarting him so abruptly as to cause repture of friendly relations and throw him into the arms of France." Nepoleon was developing an ambition to conquer the British Island and had an idea to occupy their eastern empire. The British could ill afford to push Ranjit Singh into his camp. Thus according to Murray, although giving no assurance, Seton gave them a hint that in emergency they would

not be deserted.[8] His reply was cautious which according to Payne signified that "we can promise nothing definite but you have our sympathy, and we will do what we can?"[9]

But this could not satisfy the cis-Sutlej chiefs. In the meanwhile, however Ranjit Singh sent his messengers to claim their apprehensions and they also seemed to have decided that instead of seeking protection from the British, if they could have the protection from Ranjit Singh himself, that would be better. Ranjit Singh and Sahib Singh of Patiala met each other forthwith and exchanged their turbans as a mark of perpetual friendship between them.

Treaty of Tilsit

Just this time there occured an incidence in Europe which changed the course of History in the Punjab. In July 1807, Nepoleon who had been fighting against Russia, signed the treaty of Tilsit with Tzar Alexander thus deciding the affairs with him. After this Nepoleon decided to march towards east with the purpose of occupying the British Empire in India. The English thus being threatened, Lord Minto the then Governor General of India sent Metcalf to Lahore with two fold purpose, firstly to counteract the French designs in the Punjab and secondly to check Ranjit Singh's aggressive policy in the cis-Sutlej States. The purpose in the words of Lady Minto was "to woo the great Rajah to an alliance, while refusing him the increase of territory on which he had set his heart."

Metcalf met Ranjit Singh at Kasur on 11th Sept. 1807 and discussed the affairs with him. Ranjit Singh asked him to submit a written draft of the treaty that he wanted him to sign. The terms of the treaty according to the draft that Metcalf submitted were:

1. Both, Ranjit Singh and the English would join their defence against France, and Ranjit Singh would check Nepoleon from passing through the Punjab in case he wanted to invade British India.
2. The English would have a free passage through the Punjab in case of a war with the French.
3. Ranjit Singh would give free passage to the British forces in his territory and would extend all his protection on the British messengers, passing through his territory.

Terms of the treaty obviously paid no need towards Ranjit Singh's personal ambitions and it is said, Ranjit Singh smiled and told Fakir Aziz-ud-din that how selfish the British were.

Ranjit Singh, however expressed his readiness to sign a defensive alliance with the English but forwarded his own three conditions for doing so. (1) The English would not interfere in his quarrels with the Amirs of Kabul. (2) The English would not establish a friendly relation with that chief. And (3) Ranjit Singh would be recognised the King of all the Sikhs, including the cis-Sutlej chiefs, and Metcalf was also asked to accompany him in his cis-Sutlej conquests. Metcalf refused to sign such an agreement without the permission of the Governor-General, and according to Moorcraft, Ranjit Singh was so furious over the English interference in his cis-Sutlej affairs that only Faqir Aziz-ud-din "disuaded him from war."[10]

Any way, asking Metcalf to deliberate over the matter and in the meanwhile to accompany him, wherever he went so that the things could be discussed at any time, Ranjit Singh marched South of Sutlej. First he conquered Faridkot and Malerkotla, then Ambala and Shahabad and also realised a tribute from the Thanesar chief. "There was practically an earthquake in the cis-Sutlej country." wrote Sohan Lal.

Metcalf was accompanying Ranjit Singh in his exploits in Faridkot and Malerkotla, and this indirectly served a purpose of Ranjit Singh which Metcalf did not know. Ranjit Singh, writes Griffin. "Clearly kept the envoy in his camp to weaken the resistance of the chiefs and to obtain some sort of official sanction for his enterprise."[11] Again, writes Latif, the "object of the Lahore ruler was to gain time and trick the envoy."[12] The Malerkotla ruler, we learn, actually protested to the British resident at Delhi, that they were helping Ranjit Singh against him. This seems to have astonished the British extremely, and orders were issued to Metcalf immediately to dissociate himself from Ranjit Singh in his cis-Sutlej exploits. Accordingly, when Ranjit Singh entered Ambala, a state seeking British protection, Metcalf withdrew to Fatehbad and remonstrated to Ranjit Singh for the political trick that had been played upon him.

French Danger Receded

Just this time there was a Spanish uprising against France, and the relations between English and Turkey also improved, with the result that now there was no more a danger of France invading India. Emboldened by the circumstances, Metcalf asked Ranjit to accept the alliance on British terms, that hence forward he would not interfere in cis-Sutlej areas. Ranjit Singh was not prepared to withdraw from the cis-Sutlej states so abruptly and leave them in the hands of the British. And according to Griffin, he immediately called Muhkam Chand from Kangra, collected his ammunition and prepared for war. But he was too wise to take such a drastic step in practice. Metcalf himself believed that this action of his was only to threaten British into compliance with his own wishes. Metcalf wrote back to the Governor General accordingly and the latter sent an ultimatum to the Lahore ruler saying:

"His lordship has learn with great surprise and concern, that the Maharaja aims at the subjection of chiefs who have long been considered under the protection of the power ruling in the North of Hindustan and is more especially astonished to find that the Maharaja requires the assent of the British Government to the execution of the design. By the issue of war with the Marathas the British Government became possessed of the power and right formerly exercised by that nation in the North of Hindustan."

Ranjit Singh did not reply to this ultimatum immediately and in the meanwhile began to contact the Raja of Patiala for a common action against the British. But the Raja of Patiala had already been wooed by the British and promised all protection against Ranjit Singh. The delay in reply furiated the British and, according to Cunningham, David Ochtarloney was asked to march his forces and display his power at Ludhiana. Ochtarloney reached with his forces at Ludhiana in February 1809 and sent a message to Ranjit Singh asking him to withdraw his forces from the cis-Sutlej areas and that on the failure to do so it would be assumed that Ranjit Singh did not care for their friendship.

Ranjit Singh hesitated for sometime, but finally on the advice of Faqir Aziz-ud-din agreed to the English proposals. Thus on 2nd

April 1809, Ranjit Singh recalled his forces from Faridkot and on 23th April he signed with the British what is so popularly known as the Amritsar Treaty of 1809? Important terms of the treaty were:

1. The two governments would maintain friendly relations with each other.
2. British would have no concern on the North-west of the river Sutlej, nor would they intervene in Ranjit Singh's relations with chiefs in those regions. Likewise, Ranjit Singh would now never think of the capture of the cis-Sutlej states, which would be declared to be under the protection to British.
3. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was recognised as an independent ruler and was to be in the list of active friends of the British.
4. Neither side would keep a large army on it respective banks of the river Sutlej.
5. Ranjit Singh would not maintain an army more than what was required for the internal peace and external protection, in the 45 parganas in the cis-Sutlej regions, which were yet to remain under his control.
6. Violation of any of the terms of the Treaty by any of the contracting parties, would make the Treaty null and void.

A Review

Different opinions have been expressed by different writers on Ranjit Singh's signing this treaty with the British. Thus says Dr. Sinha, "Ranjit Singh suffered a diplomatic defeat and had to put his pride in his pocket and eat the humble pie." Metcalf also wrote that Ranjit Singh "is not famous for desperate enterprises." This latter estimate of Ranjit Singh by a man who was directly dealing with him and with whom Ranjit Singh professed to have established friendly relations by signing this treaty, cannot but make us conclude that this action of Ranjit Singh was an open acceptance of a diplomatic defeat. One of the cherished goals of Ranjit was to unite all the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh, both in the cis and the trans-Sutlej areas under his own banner, but in this the Maharaja bitterly failed. Moreover the British came nearer Lahore, and at a place from where they could

easily study the movements of Ranjit Singh and intrigue for the Lahore Raj. Ranjit Singh's acceptance that he would not keep in his cis-Sutlej regions, forecs more than in required number, was according to some writers, a check on his authority and blow to his prestige.

The claim of the British on the cis-Sutlej States, too, was on fictitious ground, and betrayed on their part only a policy of might is right.' Just four years before the signing of this treaty, as S. R. Kohli writes, on the intervention of the Home Government, the British Government in India had decided not to intervene in the affairs of the cis-Sutlej States, and we fail to understand, on what moral grounds could the British declare now that by "the issue of war with the Marahattas the British Government became possessed of the power and right formerly exercised by that nation in the North of Hindustan." The war against the Marahattas had already been fought and won by the British when they occupied Delhi in 1803 and when they signed an agreement with Holkar on 24th December 1805. If this victory of the English on the Marahattas was not an agreement strong enough to justify their interference in the affairs of the cis-Sutlej States in 1805, how could this argument justify such an interferance in 1809 ?

And again, the argument that since the cis-Sutlej States were under the Marathas, after their removal from the scene by the British, these states should automatically fall into the hands of the British, too, cannot go too far. Every student of History knows that all these states had been a part of the Mughal Empire before Abdali occupied the territory from Indus to Jumna. After the decline of the Mughal power, it was Abdali who appointed governors for these regions and administered them, and it was later on from Abdali that the Sikh chiefs wrested these territories, and not from the Marathas.

The Marathas, Moreover, were only imposters and not rulers of the states, nor could it be said that the cis-Sutlej States had definitely fallen under their control, or even under their protection.

Moreover, from geographical point of view, from cultural point of view, or from religious point of view, these states were akin more to the territories in the trans-Sutlej areas, than to those any-where else. That this point was accepted by the British themselves, was proved when after the annexation of Punjab, the entire cis-Sutlej area up to

Delhi, and even including Delhi itself was put with the trans-Sutlej areas and the whole was declared to be one Province.

Yet more. Writes S. R. Kohli, Ranjit Singh's intentions over the cis-Sutlej States were not selfish. He was a man who during his life time never used his crown, nor did he ever sit on his throne, nor strike coins after his own name. The coins were rather struck after the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. If such a man wanted to unite all the Khalsa, including the cis-Sutlej States, under his banner, he was fighting for a national cause, and the opposition of the cis-Sutlej States was anti-national, yet more so when they sought the British protection.

If with such reasonable claims as above, he could not succeed in occupying the cis-Sutlej States, it was clearly a diplomatic defeat of Ranjit.

But on the other hand some writers assert that this Treaty was not a diplomatic defeat of Ranjit Singh, it was rather a master-stroke of his policy that he saved the Punjab from the British hands at least till a few years after his death. Moreover, writes Cunningham, he got a *Carte Blanche* for realising his ambition in the North and North—Eastern parts of the Punjab. His Southern borders having been secure, he had no more to keep a huge army for protection against the British, and waste his money and energy on that side. This he could now use elsewhere.

And yet more with enemies all around and with his power in the Punjab itself unconsolidated, it added greatly to his prestige by having established friendly relations with a power so big as the English.

Be that as it may, whether it was a diplomatic defeat of Ranjit Singh and he signed the Treaty under duress[13] or it was a master-stroke of his policy, we cannot but say that Ranjit Singh had no alternative to what he did? Ranjit Singh's was yet an infant State and to have challenged the English, who had come all the way from Calcutta to Delhi, and who had now established their power on whole of the rest of India, could not but prove suicidal. The "downfall of every Indian power, which has measured arms with us is a constant reflection with him" wrote Governor-General Auckland in 1838, and this was applicable no better to the conditions in 1838 than to those in 1809.

Moreover, Ranjit Singh's soldiers were no equal to the British soldiers in training and discipline, and this he realised himself. An interectting story is told in this connection by some writers like Latif and Gordon. It is said that Metcalf had brought with him some Muslim solders, and during the time his negotiations with the Maharaja were going on, the Muharram festival of the Muslim fell. To celebrate this the few of the Muslim soldiers decided to take out a procession. When this procession passed before some Gurdwaras in Lahore, moved by indignation some Akalis fell upon the Muslim soldiers. But the latter gave them a square battle with the result that a few soldiers as they were, routed more than a thousand of the Akalis who fled before them. This incident is said to have opened the eyes of Ranjit Singh. While on the one hand he praised the bravery of these soldiers before Metcalf, on the other hand he was convinced that he had to proceed against the British very cautiously. The instance as to how the large armies of Holkar and Marathas had been destroyed by the English, too was before him. His maternal uncle, Bhag Singh of Jind, who being nearer Delhi, had studied the British strength more closely, also advised him against challenging this power. And besides, Ranjit Singh knew that the British were determined and had evolved out a definite policy of bringing the cis-Sutlej States under their protection.

In case of a war with the English, it was feared that all the cis-Sutlej chiefs would side with them, and within his own territories in the trans-Sutlej areas, too, says Sayed Abdul Qadir, "it was feared that taking advantage of his difficulties the half—conquered chieftains and tribes would break out into a rebellion against him."[14] And yet more, "finding Maharaja obdurate, the British Government was likely to extend its protection to the rulers of Kasur, Multan and Jhang as well," the rulers, indeed, who were already anxious to secure that help against Ranjit. Nor were Ranjit Singh's financial resources and his arms supply anything comparable to those of the English.

"He never exhausted his strength in wild and hazardous enterprises, but restraining his ambition within the limits of a reasonable probability, they were not only so well timed and skilfully arranged as generally to ensure success," wrote Osborne in 1838, "but failure, (in the rare instance when he did fail), never seriously shook his stability, or impaired his resources."[15] And the greatest service that

he rendered to his nation by not entering into this hazardous enterprise was says Abdul Qadir, that by getting a free hand for national development, he "was able to lift his people from the position of political adventurers and freelances and give them the status of imperial race."[16]

(B) THE CIS-SUTLEJ TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

Although "the Treaty of Amritsar marks the definite beginning of Anglo-Sikh friendship," yet for sometime suspicions did remain. British were apprehensive that Ranjit Singh was yet making contacts with Sindhia. He also continued receiving agents from Holkar and Amir Khan for a pretty long time after the signing of the Treaty, and the British had definite doubts that the Punjab and Deccan might unite against them. They also believed that Ranjit Singh was making secret moves to induce the Sikhs of Sirhind against the British.

Nor were the apprehensions of Ranjit Singh himself brought to rest. His fear was that the English had a definite ambition on the Punjab, and the Treaty of Amritsar would be flouted by them, whenever they found the opportunity to do so. It was this reason that led him to build a small fort at Phillaur, a town on the Sikh side of Sutlej, only five miles from the nearest British station. Muhkam Chand, who was supposed to be the decided enemy of the British, was put incharge of that fort, whose duty was to watch the British movements on the other side of the river. According to some writers, Muhkam Chand also used to receive there, the deserters from the British army.

Soon, however the relations between the two powers improved. In 1811 some presents were exchanged between them, and in 1812 Ochterloney attended the marriage of Ranjit Singh's son, Kharrak Singh. Except a small difference of view on Wadni, as discussed below, these friendly relations lasted from 1812 to 1823, and it was during this period that assured of each other's good intention, both the sides diverted their attentions elsewhere to realise their respective territorial ambition. It was during this time that Ranjit Singh captured the States of Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar, and Kangra. And, as Cunningham writes, it was not long before "Ranjit Singh had become master of the Punjab almost unheeded by the English," which could have never been possible without peace on this border. Metcalf, before taking

leave, had told the Maharaja that he would reap the fruits of this alliance in about 20 years' time, and the Maharaja told Wade in 1827 that "his words have been verified." The British also, being freed of any danger on this side, subdued Marathas, Nepalese and Rajputs and thus established their ascendency over whole of Northern India, except the Punjab.

The Bitterness Again

Close friendly relations between the two powers continued, as discussed above, from 1812 to 1823. But by the latter year, both the sides having realised their ambitions elsewhere to a great extent, turned their attention towards each other, and as a result, the bitterness between them developed again.

Wadni

The first subject of conflict between them was Wadni. Situated in the cis-Sutlej area and held by a zamindar, Mian Naudha, it was secured by Rani Sada Kaur from Ranjit Singh in 1807, when the latter, as invited by some cis-Sutlej chiefs, led his expedition towards that side. Mian Naudha, in return for this protection, promised future fealty to her.

During the next expedition of Ranjit Singh towards this side in 1808, Wadni was again protected by Sada Kaur, to whom, now, an unconditional grant of it was made by the Maharaja against the payment by Rani of Rs. 15,000. Mian Naudha was declared to be the Rani's Zamindar in 1811. But in 1817 when he died, his son was dispossessed by Rani, who now occupied the territory direct.

The Rani herself was thrown into prison in 1821 by the Maharaja, who now sent his force to occupy the territory. The Rani, says Cunningham, appealed from her prison to the British for help, who accepting her as chief of Kanheya confedracy or the Sikhs in the cis-Sutlej area under their protection, ejected from the fort of Wadni, the soldiers of the Maharaja forthwith. "Ranjit Singh fretted and fumed but prudently avoided a collision with the British troops."[17]

Captain Wade, the British Superintendent of the Sikh and hill affairs at Ludhiana, argued that since Rani had held Wadni from 1808 under a sanad of grant from Lahore, and as the sanad was supposed

to convey only life grant of the territory to her, on her death the territory must pass to Lahore. Moreover, while establishing Rani's authority over that territory after the Treaty of Amritsar, Ranjit Singh had obtained Ochterloney's permission to employ force on that side of the Sutlej. Nor had the vakil of Sada Kaur ever attended at the British political Agent's office at Ambala before 1822 without a prior introduction by the vakil of Ranjit Singh, which indirectly signified that Sada Kaur was a dependant of the Maharaja, with all her possessions in the cis and trans-Sutlej areas.

The Government of India, however considered the Rani's protection of the territory in 1807 as an establishment of her personal soveregnty, and therefore its grant by Ranjit Singh in 1808 as invalid. And since Wadni lay south of Sutlej, and since Rani, at least once, had sought British protection, Ranjit Singh's claim over the territory could not be accepted.

Thus a bitterness developed in relations between the two in 1823. Shortly after, however some sort of compromise was reached and in 1826, when the Maharaja fell ill, the Govt. of India sent Dr. Murray for his treatment and in 1827, they also accepted Ranjit Singh's claims on Wadni, Anandpur, Makhowal and Chamkaur, as recommended by Wade.

Ahluwalia Possessions

Some difference of view also developed on the Ahluwalia possessions in the cis-Sutlej regions. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, as discussed above, had been on friendly terms with Ranjit Singh and had also accompanied and helped the latter in many of his expeditions and conquests, like those of the cis-Sutlej area in 1806 and 1807. In 1825, however some quarrel arose between the two and Fateh Singh fled across the Sutlej with whole of his family and took refuge at Jagraon. He also sent confidential messages to the British agents, Murray at Ambala and Wade at Ludhiana for British protection against Ranjit, who he wrote, wanted to confiscate his cis and trans-Sutlej territories both.

Metcalf in his letter of 14th January, 1826 wrote to Murray[18] that although the British protection could not be extended on the trans-Sutlej possessions of this chief for obvious reasons, to his cis-Sutlej

possessions the protection could be extended, and that too, for the territories (1) which he had inherited from his ancestors or (2) which he himself occupied alongwith Ranjit Singh on the basis of equality. But for those territories, even in the cis-Sutlej regions, which he had secured from Ranjit Singh as a grant, the British could guarantee him no help.

In the correspondence that followed between the Maharaja and the British authorities, however Ranjit Singh claimed the protection of all the 454 villages belonging to the Ahluwalia chief, the districts of Jagraon and Naraingarh of which had been granted by the Maharaja himself in return for a Nazrana from the Ahluwalia chief. His claim were supported by Wade, who in his letter to Clerk dated 10th January, 1828, argued that (1) when asked by Capt. Birch to send a vakil to represent him, Fateh Singh had refused it on the basis that he had already been represented through the Maharaja's vakil. (2) When in 1812, Fateh Singh sent his agent to Ludhiana, he was introduced to the British agent by the Maharaja's vakil, through whom he conducted all his affairs. (3) In March 1827, Fateh Singh returned to his possessions in the trans-Sutlej areas and there was a re-establishment of friendly relations between him and the Maharaja, on the basis of an agreement that clearly showed that the former was hardly better than a political dependent of the latter, and (4) the British had not interfered when the Maharaja directed the Ahluwalia chief not to proceed against Maha Singh Bhirog, a refractory vassal of the latter.[19]

But these arguments were not accepted by the Governor General. It was argued that the correspondence between Fateh Singh and Ochterloney between 1809 and 1813 clearly showed that the former had agreed to put his cis-Sutlej possessions under the British protection. And moreover, the promise to extend protection had already been given in 1826 by Metcalf, shortly after Fateh Singh had taken refuge at Jagraon. It was, therefore no good to withdraw the British commitments. Thus on the basis of the distinction that had already been made by Metcalf, as discussed above, districts of Jagraon and Naraingarh, which had been granted by the Maharaja to Fateh Singh, were declared to be under Maharaja's protection, and to rest of the Ahluwalia possessions in the cis-Sutlej areas, British protection was extended.

Similar disputes arose over other territories such as Sialba, Machchiwara and Kang possessions, all of which were decided in favour of one or the other power, as comanded by facts. In almost all these disputed Wade supported Ranjit Singh, whereas Murray opposed him. And their correspondence with the higher British authorities clearly shows that not very an often were their views influenced by their personal prejudices against eachother. And we learn that these personal animosities developed to such a length that at one stage the Government of India had to warn them to correct their behaviour.

Ferozepur

Of all these disputes, the more important was that of Ferozepur, closer study of which clearly shows that as the time passed, the Government of India were abandoning their old attitude of sweet reasonableness. They wanted to occupy the city, and no reason or rhyme could stand their way, when they had decided to do so. "It also illustrates," writes Dr. R. R. Sethi[20] the Sikh ruler's character; he gauged the extent to which the British would yield to his self-seeking demands, and when his hypocritical claims did not meet the arguments and determination of the Government he resorted to the artful method of preserving friendship by himself yielding." This view of Dr. Sethi may perhaps sum up correctly the attitute of the Maharaja towards the British on all the points of dispute between them which follow, but to call him hypocrite on this score will perhaps be an underestimation of the adverse circumstances under which he had to manage his affair. We do not, however intend entering here into a discussion on this point. The facts themselves will clear the position.

Importance of Ferozepur for the British

The first importance of the city of Ferozepur for the British, as it is clear from the correspondence, was that it fulfilled satisfactorily the growing need of the British to have places of strategic importance for their expanding empire on this side, and their clear determination to him in Sikh territory by constructing a fence of posts all along the Sutlej frontier. Murray[21] wrote as early as on 12th December 1823, that the Ludhiana post held by the English being distant from Lahore, it could not be very useful as a post of check or observation in time

of peace. Nor could it work as a good depot in time of war. Ferozepur was superior in this sense. Being only 40 miles from Lahore, and with only one river to cross, it was important as M' Gregor wrote: "it appears advisable to have a force as near that capital (Lahore) as possible."[22] Moreover, situated close to the boundary line of Bhawalpur, it could help the English have an effective control over the cis-Sutlej chiefs as well as on the state of Bhawalpur. Ranjit Singh's movements towards Sind could also be watched. And commanding the passage to the great ferry station of Hari-ke-pattan, its commercial importance, too, could not be under-estimated.[23]

In order to discuss the claims of the two powers on Ferozepur more correctly, it would be essential to remember a few facts regarding its back history. One Gurbux Singh, having his territory on the north of Sutlej, had acquired Ferozepur in 1771. About 1772, the Sardar having grown old, divided his possessions among his sons Dina Singh, Dhanna Singh, Gurmkh Singh and Jai Singh—Dhana Singh receiving port and territory of Ferozepur. Soon after, however Nizam-ud-din of Kasur invaded this territory and occupied half of its seven villages comprising the domain of Ferozepur. Kasur itself was conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1807, who assigned it as Jagir to his co-adjutor, Nihal Singh Attariwala. The latter soon dispossessed Gurbux Singh and his sons of their trans-Sutlej possessions near Kasur. He was also invited by the Dogras of Ferozepur to dislodge Dhana Singh, but in this he failed. In 1808, however Nihal Singh crossed the Sutlej again, this time accompanied by Ranjit Singh, and hemmed in the Ferozepurians, sharing with Dhana Singh, the produce of their land. In 1809 the British protection was extended to this territory. Dhana Singh died in 1818 and was succeeded by his widow. Lachhman Kaur.[24]

Ranjit Singh's claims, which were argued by Wade in his favour, run as follows. Firstly, Ranjit Singh claimed that the Ferozepur Sikhs were among the oldest of his subjects. They, he claimed, were among the dependents of Nihal Singh Attariwala, his vassal from 1805. Secondly when the Ferozepur Sikhs and Nihal Singh fell out, the former, established themselves under Baba Sahib Singh Bedi. And latter in consequence of their giving trouble to Ranjit's vakil, when the latter wrote to captain Birch to keep them in order, the captain wrote back that it was Maharaja's concern. Latter, again, in the time

of Capt. Ross, when Lachhmi Kaur the chief of Ferozepur appealed to the Captain against Dharam Singh and Khushal Singh, the other chiefs who were giving her some trouble, the Captain ordered the appeal to be handed over to the vakil of Ranjit Singh, who was the proper authority for this. And in 1824, when Lachhmi Kaur offered to hand over Ferozepur to the British, in return for an equivalent territory near her father's estate in Buria, it was declined, because the Governor-General-in-Council held that the "measure would doubtless excite alarm and suspicion in the mind of Ranjit Singh."

But where might is right, no arguments are discussed. Lachhmi Kaur died in 1835, and Wade asked Mackeson to report on Ranjit Singh's claims. But the discussion was futile, as the British had a preconceived plan up their sleeves. The territory was occupied by them forthwith and in 1838, it was made a military cantonment.

"With the loss of Ferozepur it appeared as if a pistol had been pointed at the temple of Ranjit Singh. He, however swallowed this loss in a spirit of helplessness."[25]

Weak Position of Ranjit Singh

After studying the facts, Jaequemont, a French traveller, had concluded in 1829 that Ranjit Singh's opinion had decisively been formed on his utter inability to contend with British arms. And this was no exaggeration.

In 1815, Ranjit Singh had been approached by Pirthi Bilas, the vakil of Gurkhas, for a help against the British. The Maharaja expressed his inability, though latter he expressed his disappointment when, after the Anglo-Nepalese war, the Gurkhas were driven out of the neighbouring regions. Again, although in the early stages of the Anglo-Nepalese was (1816-18) the English faced reverses and the Maharaja did realise their weakness, yet he did not take an advantage of the situation.[26]

In 1820, Ranjit Singh did not respond to the entreaties of the ex-king of Nagpur for help against the English. Nor did he respond to the similar entreaties of ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II in 1822. Again, in 1825-26, when the British army was marching on Bharatpur, the Sikh army was ready for an expedition on Kashmir. The Bharatpur chief, according to Osborne,[27] requested the Maharaja for help with a force

of 20,000 soldiers, and offered in return an amount of Rs. 1,00,000 for every day's march of his soldiers with him, and Rs 50,000 a day when the troops remained with him but did not march-Further more, in the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-25) the British armies suffered terribly in the jungles of Burma. But here again, writes Abdul Qadir,[28] Ranjit Singh was too cautious to take any advantage.

"To one friendship," wrote Griffin, "the Maharaja remained ever constant; from one alliance he never sought to shake himself free." And this was never more true than it was in his relations with the English.

After the dispute on Wadni, Ahluwalia possessions and Ferozepur had been settled, there was peace for sometime. But differences arose again, entailing an exchange of active and heated arguments between English and the Sikhs.

Fatehgarh

Fatehgarh was a Garhi or a mud fortress only 25 paces square with a few attached huts. It was situated within, and was a part of, the city of Anandpur, over which the Singhpurias forwarded their claims.

The Singhpuria Misl, founded by Kapur Singh of Fyzulpur[29] village, had been expanded considerably by his successor, Khushal Singh, when he added to his possessions the districts of Jullundur and Amarkot, and the neighbouring territories of Rupar and Anandpur Makhowal. Kushal Singh was succeeded by his son Budh Singh in 1795, and it was this gentleman who had built this fortress in 1800 for the collection of rent from his neighbouring possessions. Harassed by Ranjit Singh, however he soon left his trans-Sutlej possessions, took refuge in his Cis-Sutlej territories, and made a request for British protection, which was given to him by Government's order of 11th July, 1810. On his death in 1815, and on the petition of his sons, Murray divided these cis-Sutlej territories, including this Garhi, among them. And this settlement was ratified later by Ochterloney in 1817.

For 23 years, till 1829, when Ranjit Singh's forces occupied it, the Garhi had been under a separate Thanedar appointed by the Lahore Government, and had been inhabited by Sodhis and religious recluses. In 1829, Murray informed Frazer, the resident at Delhi, that the fortress

had been forcibly occupied by Ranjit Singh's soldiers under the command of Chet Singh, who was accompanied by a peon of the Ludhiana Agency, proving there by that Wade had some sort of complicity in it, and that the neighbouring chiefs had been severely alarmed by this.

Wade in his letter, refuted the charge that any of his peons had accompanied the attacking forces, and held that although the garhi had been owned by Singhpurias yet the persons in its occupation on their behalf, were playing hosts to thieves and offenders. He further added, the order of the Government dated 14th Nov. 1828, had placed Anandpur under the supremacy of the Maharaja and the fortress was a part of that city.

But Murray maintained that the fortress was distinct from Anandpur, ruled by a Thanedar appointed direct by Lahore Government. Being Singhpuria possession for fifty years, it had been confirmed so by Ochterloney in 1817 and that in the list of the territories claimed by the Maharaja in 1809, there was no mention of this fortress.

To this Wade replied again that the fortress was a part of the town of Anandpur and there was no need of making its separate mantion in the 1809 list. And the Ochterloney's signature on Murray's redistribution in 1817, was only attestation, and no confirmation of sovereignty on Singhpurias.

Be that as it may, the Government of India deputed Wade, Murray and Lt. Nicholl to make topographical survey of the territory. This was done and in the sketch map of Anandpur which was drawn by them, Fatehgarh had to be shown as part of the town. The Government declared, therefore that since Singhpurias were Sodhis, and since all the Sodhis of Anandpur had already been declared by the order of the Government in 1828, to be under the Maharaja's protection, they held Fatehgarh as all others held their territories elsewhere in the town, under the sovereignty of Ranjit Singh.

Murray felt defeated and in a long letter to the Government he brought out the point that Singhpurias were not Sodhis, but of Jat extraction, and therefore the order of the Government of 1828 did not apply to them. The Governor-General felt convinced of Murray's arguments, but he could not reverse his previous order because

immediately after that declaration, Wade had informed the Maharaja of it and thus had already committed the British Government.

When, however Wade was censured, he maintained that, it mattered little whether Singhpurias were Khatris or Jats. What mattered more was that Fatehgarh had been shown by the topographical survey to be a part of the town of Anandpur, and therefore it must belong to the Maharaja. Wade's argument, too, was strong enough, and it had to be accepted. So much so that later, when differences between the two had been resolved, Murray himself wrote in a latter dated January 3, 1831 to Wade that "I have now seen the spot and sense or right.....that Fatehgarh is a component part of the town of Anandpur under the authority of the ruler of the Punjab."[30]

Talwandi

Talwandi was another disputed territory. And this is important, not only for the acrimony that developed between the two powers, but also fcr the way the antagonism between Murray and Wade influenced that politics.

Situated within the cis-Sutlej protected States of the British, Talwandi was originally held by one Mangu Khan, from whom it was wrested by Sudha Singh of Dhanaura, the Rajgarhia chief. Kang chief occupied it forcibly in 1803. But after two years, it was recovered with the help of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, by Sodhis Jai Singh and Surjan Singh, who had been related to Rajgarhian family and who restored it to Mai Sukhan, the widow of Sudda Singh. British protection was extended to it during 1808-09.

Mai Sukhan died in 1824. Sodhi Uttam Singh forwarded his claims to Murrary, but they were rejected and the territory was handed over to Sodhi Tilok Singh's widow Raj Kaur and her brothers, Didar Singh and Diwan Singh. But soon there was an internal dissension, taking advantage of which Uttam Singh occupied the territory in 1828. Raj Kaur appealed to the English, who got the territory restored to her. But Raj Kaur herself was not an efficient ruler and it was not long before the trouble rose again. This time it was the Rani's own officers who rebelled against her. But this time, instead of appealing to the English, she requested Ranjit Singh for help, who got once again, the order restored.

This led Murray to write to the British resident that Ranjit Singh's interferance in the case was uncalled for. He forwarded that the territory had never been a dependency of the Maharaja. Nor had he mentioned it in the list of the territories he claimed in 1809. Moreover, he added, the employees of the Ludhiana agency had been bribed by the Lahore court not to intervene, and that of all the claimants of the territory, the claim of Uttam Singh was the strongest.

Wade in his letter to the resident, in reply, challenged Murray to prove that any of the employees under him had been bribed by the Lahore Darbar. He declared that the Lahore agent had presented him the petition which Raj Kaur had made for help, and that the facts in that application clearly showed that she was a dependent of Ranjit Singh. Moreover, he added, the Sodhis had already been declared by the Government's order of 14th November, 1828 to be under the supremacy of the Maharaja, and there was no reason to deny him that claim in this case.

The government instituted an enquiry in the matter under Murray. But this complicated the matter yet more. Raj Kaur declared that Talwändi had been taken by Maharaja's forces violently without her knowledge. But this was impossible, as her application to Ranjit for help showed. And Wade asserted that it was under Murrays intimidation that Raj Kaur had said so. While this discussion was yet in progress, Raj Kaur's brothers Didar Singh and Diwan Singh Sodhis of Anandpur forwarded their own claims on the territory to Wade. And this complicated the matter yet more. On the further enquiry of the Government of India, whether the parties in possession of the territory in 1809, were Maharaja's dependents or not, Murray asserted that the Sodhis who were thus in its possession, were independent. But according to Wade, they were not, as Ranjit Singh and Ahulwalia's help in 1803-04, to Raj Kaur to get the territory back from Sudda Singh of Dhanaura showed. Murray, however forwarded that such a help could be a help from one friend to another, not necessarily from a sovereign to a dependant.

The British Government, however agreed to Wade's views, and the claims of Raj Kaur and her brothers, and Ranjit Singh's supremacy over them, were accepted.

Dispute on Atiana

Situated 15 miles from Ludhiana, the village of Atiana was one of the 47 places in the cis-Sutlej regions over which the Maharaja had forwarded his claims in 1809. It was then in the possession of Baba Ram Singh, whom Ranjit Singh claimed as his vassal. But the case was yet to be examined by the British. While the case was yet to be decided, in 1828 Wade learnt that the village was occupied by Sangat Singh on the plea that it was granted to him by Ranjit. It was astonishing to the British that Ranjit Singh should make a grant of and Sangat Singh should accept, a place which was yet under dispute. Asked upon, the Maharaja denied that he made any such grant. But the papers of the Maharaja and those of Sangat Singh were conflicting.

Be that as it may, after the Maharaja's denial, Sangat Singh was directed by the British Government to restore the territory to Ram Singh forthwith, and this restoration was later confirmed by the Maharaja himself.

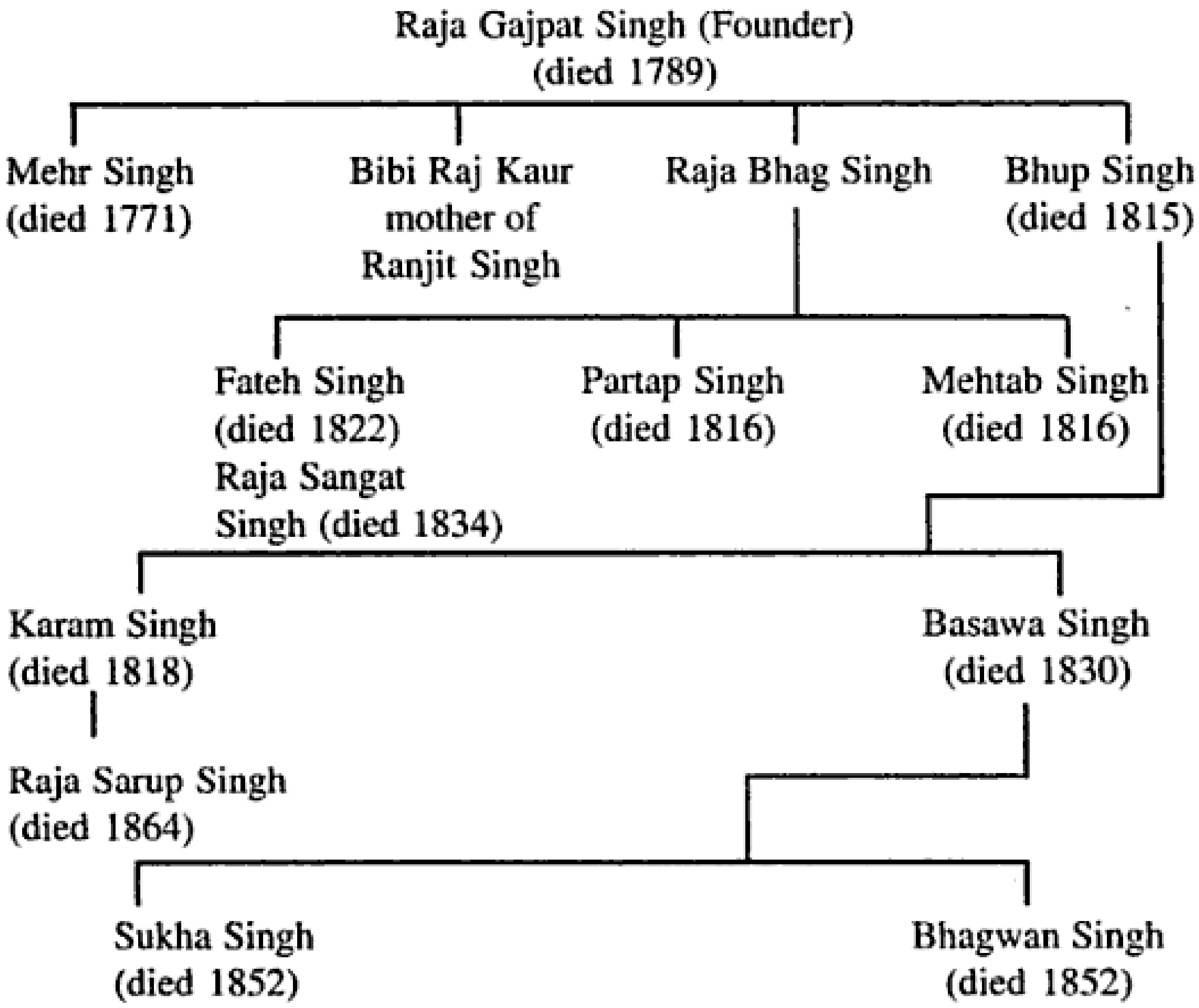
This dispute was important because to made the English towards the close of 1828, to declare a point of policy, that no protected chief could ever accept a grant from, or interfere in the cis-Sutlej territories of the Maharaja, without intimating the Government. For sometime, however the chiefs continued in their old habit of visiting the Maharaja's court. But when in July 1829, Jaswant Singh of Nabha visited Lahore for the grant of a Jagir from the Maharaja, the Governor-General declared once again in definite words that no cis-Sutlej chief could do so without British permission. Thus the policy was further confirmed.

This led to further widening of the gulf between Maharaja and the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs.

Successor to the Chiefship of Jind[31]

Raja Sangat Singh of Jind died on 3rd Nov. 1834, at the young age of 24, without leaving any lineal heir to succeed. Though according to the Sikh custom the State could be treated as an escheat to the British, the latter permitted Mai Sahib Kaur, the mother and the Regent of Sangat Singh, when he was alive, to administer the State for sometime under the guidance of clerk, their political agent at Ambala. This

Genealogical Table of the Jind family (After Griffin, p. 310)



reticence on the part of the British, led many to forward their claims on the territory. They were:

1. Sangat Singh's second cousins, Sarup Singh, Sukha Singh and Bhagwan Singh, the Sardars of Bazidpur and Badrukhan.
2. Raja of Nabha, as a descendant of Tilok Singh, the grand father of Gajpat Singh, the founder of the Jind chiefship.
3. The widows of Sangat Singh, and two of his father.
4. Rani Bhag Bhari, the widow of Partap Singh, the son of Bhag Singh.
5. The Raja of Patiala.

The Governor-General, after discussing all this matter, declared that, the houses of Nabha, Bazidpur and Badrukhan, having separate dynasties, could have no claim. Nor could the claims of the widows other than those of Sangat Singh be enterained. But Sangat Singh's widows too being very young could not shoulder such a responsibility.

There were only two possible solutions to the question. Firstly the British could resume the right of jurisdiction, which, however they did not like to do, firstly because of the remoteness of the territories, secondly because these territories were scattered and thirdly because of their poverty. The second possibility was that they should be handed over to an adoped child or to a collateral in return for a tribute.

The last suggestion was considered to be better. The Political Agent had already expressed the view, that Bhup Singh having set up a separate dynasty, did not dispossess his successors of this claim. And the Governor-General agreed that Sarup Singh, one of the descendants of Bhup Singh could be the best choice. But it was declared that Sarup Singh would get only those territories which belonged to Gajpat Singh himself. All the territories conquered after his death would be handed over either to the British or to Ranjit Singh, as mutually decided upon. The settlement of the controversy between the English and the Maharaja however took a long time, from 1834 to 1837.

The principle to be followed on the settlement of the territory, as suggested by the British, was that all the territories which the Maharaja granted to this house after 1809, would return to him and the rest to the British.

Ranjit Singh, however taking advantage of the friendly attitude of the British, claimed that, according to the Shastras, and according to the custom which obtained in the country, if a man left no son or grandson, his inheritance passed to his nephews. Wade was surprised on this argument. The British Government forwarded that Ranjit Singh made no such claims on the ancestral possession of the cis-Sutlej chiefs at the time of signing the Treaty of Amritsar. Only the services of those persons in the cis-Sutlej regions were permitted to him, who held a Jagir from him. Moreover, it was asserted that the principle of inheritance for the maternal nephew had never been applied in the case of the lapse of the estate of any of his own feudatories and more. If this claim of the Maharaja on the cis-Sutlej territories, was recognised by the British he would forward similar claims on the territories of some other chiefs. The Hindu law which the Maharaja wanted to apply in this case was applicable only to the individual properties and not to the big principalities, such as this. And yet more, the British claimed that the lands granted absolutely in gift without conditions, whether

before or after 1809, could not be reverted to the grantee. Nor was there a law which could commend that the donor could resume the land of the donee. And lastly it was asserted that, as an escheat, too, Ranjit Singh could not claim it, because he was not a Lord Paramount of these territories in the cis-Sutlej regions.

Yet, however the policy of the British was to remain friendly towards the Maharaja. And it was agreed upon that Sarup Singh would get all the territories which belonged originally to Gajpat Singh. All the grants of the Maharaja, such as that of Halwara, Talwandi and a moiety of Mudki and Ghiaspura, which he made after 1809, would revert to him. And rest of the territories such as Ludhiana, which were acquired by the descendants of Gajpat Singh, lapsed to the British as an escheat. A subsistance allowance was also granted to Sangat Singh's widows, to be paid partly by the English and partly by Sarup Singh.

Syed Ahmed of Peshawar

Between 1827 and 1831, there arose another problem, which raised doubts in the mind of Ranjit Singh regarding the British attentions towards Punjab. There was an internal rising in Peshawar, headed by one Syed Ahmed. According to some writers, Syed Ahmed was a puppet of the British, through whom they wanted to keep the Maharaja in trouble. Thus, according to one view[32] Syed Ahmed belonged to Bareilly, and was a British subject. He had organised a regular propaganda work against Ranjit Singh, at Patna in Bihar and had many agencies at different places in India. The latter fact is confirmed also by Sir Charles Aitchison, in his 'Lord Lawrence.' Morever, they say that he informed[33] the Lieut. Governor of North-West Province regarding his intentions against Punjab, to which he received the reply, that the Lieut. Governor had nothing to say, so long as their own territory was not violated. If the British really had good intentions towards the Maharaja, they should have at least informed him of such developments.

But to an impartial observer these arguments do not seem sufficient to prove that Sayed Ahmed was a puppet of the British. At the same time, however we can but conclude, that although the British may not have helped him actively, yet they do not seem to have been averse to such developments against the Maharaja. That the British

did want to see that the Maharaja should remain continuously busy with some problems, is proved beyond doubt with Wade's letter of apprehension, which he wrote to Secretary saying that Ranjit now "will not be long before he directs his attention to another quarter." And again when in 1837, Dost Mohammad of Afghanistan wanted to recapture Peshawar but was defeated by the Sikh forces, the British wrote him offering to mediate between the Maharaja and Dost Mohammad and thus help establishing friendly relations between the two. But the Maharaja expressed astonishment over such an offer and wrote that since the Afghans had already been defeated by the Sikhs, there was no necessity of any such mediation by anybody. Cunningham confirms that if the Maharaja agreed to some such mediations, the British intention definitely was to limit his influence on that side. But the Maharaja was too wise to fall into such traps.[34]

(C) THE SIND TANGLE

The story of the Anglo-Sikh relations with Sink, is the story of the Maharaja's failure against the superior political diplomacy of the English. It is a story also of how, to realise their own political ambitions, the British had little compunction in stabbing the friends and foes alike at the back.

Relations between Sikhs and the Amirs till 1831

The first important event in the relations between Punjab and Sind occured in 1809, when the Amirs offered Ranjit Singh at this time, being in the think of his affairs with Metcalf refused the offer, fearing a risk of the British displeasure.

The next important event occured in 1818, when Ranjit Singh conquered Multan. The Amirs were alarmed when they found the Maharaja so near their boundary line, and their alarms were not baseless. After the conquest of Multan, the Maharaja actually started planning his expeditions on that country. He led his first expedition in that direction in 1823, with the pretext of punishing the Balochis who had attacked his troops near Multan, but in reality with an idea to study the situation in Shikarpur and occupy it if possible.[35] The Amirs sent, huge presents to the Maharaja to please him. But the Maharaja, in 1824, demanded from them an annual tribute failing

which he threatened invasion. The Amirs naturally resisted and Ranjit Singh marched on them in 1825. But fortunately for the Amirs, due to the famine conditions in that country, the Maharaja returned and abandoned the scheme for a time.[36]

In 1826, Ranjit Singh claimed once again that, since he had occupied major portion of the territories held previously by the Afghans in Punjab, the tribute which after their subjugation by Nadir Shah in 1740, the Amirs used to pay to the Afghans should now be paid to him. The proposal was again resisted by the Amirs. The Maharaja was just preparing for an expedition when his attention was drawn towards Peshawar, where Syed Ahmed was trying to organise a jehad against Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh remained busy with Syed Ahmed from 1827 to 1831 and after that when he turned his attention towards Sind, he found that the English had already stolen a march over him.

Anglo-Sind Relations till 1831

The first Anglo-Sind contact is said to have been made in 1758, through merchants as usual, when some English merchants got permission to establish a factory at Thatta. These merchants got some more commercial concessions in 1861, but due to their distrustful political motives, the Amirs forced them to vacate the country in 1875. An attempt of the English to re-establish their commercial activities in Sind in 1799, failed. By 1807, however the circumstances had changed. The British had established their power in India, from Bangle to the borders of Punjab. After signing of the treaty of Tilsit between Nepoleon and the Tzar Elexander of Russia, the British apprechensions regarding Nepoleonic ambitions towards India increased[37] and they forced the Amirs to sign with them a Treaty in 1809. This Treaty which was renewed in 1820, provided that there would be an eternal friendship between English and the Amirs and that the Amirs would not permit any European or American to settle in their country, but each would permit the settlement of other's subjects if they conducted themselves in orderly manners.Nothing important happened more till 1831.

After 1831

With the year 1831, the entire scene in the Anglo-Sikh relations on Sind changed, and now a period of intense diplomatic activity

started between the two. By this time, Ranjit Singh's ambitions being checked towards the East by the Amritsar treaty of 1809, and he having realised his ambitions in the North-West by conquerring Kashmir and Peshawar, etc., and more particularly having slain in 1831, his formidable enemy, Syed ahmed; the only outlet for his military activities now was towards Sind. Moreover, by this time, Sind had become a weak country, which could arouse the ambitions of any of the neighbouring powers on it. And by this time, when Ranjit Singh had conquered all the Afghan possessions of Kashmir, Peshawar and Multan, etc., in Punjab, wind alone could not escape his attention. Geographically and culturally too, Ranjit Singh was justified in aspiring to unite Punjab and Sind together, as Sind and Punjab had been having a common culture from the very ancient times, as proved by the discovery of the sites of Mohenjodaro, etc. And yet more, Ranjit Singh realised that by conquerring Sind, he would have an outlet on the Arabian Sea, by which he could have contacts with the over-sea countries, free from the English. But precisely for these same ambitions of Ranjit Singh, the British were careful lest he developed his hold over Sind. By this time also, the British had realised the commercial importance of Sind, and they had already planned—as it would be clear from a brief study of the question of Indus Navigation, given below—how they could realise their political ambitions through commercial games.

The Indus Navigation

The British had been interested in the navigation of the Indus from the early years of the 19th century. They had been entertaining the hopes of controlling the Central Asian Markets, which was possible only through the Indus route. "The navigation of Indus," wrote William Moorcroft, as early as in 1809, "although little known to Europeans, as it had not been attempted by them.....is perfectly practicable for boats of considerable burden."[38] There were, however several other reasons as well, which precipitated definitely the British plan to navigate the Indus. Treaty of Turkomanchai signed in Feb. 1828, as in the words of Kaye, "delivered hand and foot bound to the court of St. Petersburgh," the country of Persia.[39] Russia was further aspiring for the exploits, not only in Afghanistan, but in Khorassan, Herat and India itself. The navigation of Indus could develop British contacts

with all these countries and thus forestall the Russian moves.

Moreover, just this time, a mission from the Persian ruler, Fateh Ali, carrying a proposal for the marriage of his daughter, visited the Amir of Hyderabad; and the British naturally grew apprehensive, that if both these countries became friendly, Russia could develop her influence on Sind, very easily through Persia. And again Russia already and commercial influence in Bokhara and the adjoining Khanates, which could be counteracted easily by similar English interest in Sind and Central Asia. Another benefit of the Indus navigation would be that the disposal of the produce and manufactures of the European and Indian dominions of the British, would be facilitated. And again, the British did realise that Ranjit Singh had his ambitions on the country of Sind, through which he was aspiring to have an outlet on the Arabian sea, whereby to establish contacts with over-sea countries. The only check on Ranjit Singh towards that side, wrote Cunningham, was "to open the Indus to the navigation of the world."[40] Besides the secret purpose of the English, as confirmed by Charles Masson, was to encircle the country of the Maharaja,[41] as Lord Ellenborough's dispatch of October 1842, to the Queen confirms: "Lord Ellenborough looks forward to the Indus superseding the Ganges as the channel of communication with England, and to bringing European regiments and all military stores by that route to the Northwestern Frontier."

But such a move on the part of the English, it was realised, would naturally be resented to both by Ranjit Singh and the Amirs of Sind. A very cautious plan was therefore needed, which was chalked out by the British authorities during 1827 and 1828.

In 1827, Ranjit Singh had sent some presents to Amherst, the then Governor-General in India. The next year when Amherst retired to England, it was planned that the return presents should be sent to the Maharaja on behalf of His Majesty, the King of England. These presents would comprise of a team of cart-horses, one stallion and 4 mares, and would be sent through the Indus, and 'the authorities both in England and India contemplated that much information of political and graphical nature might be acquired in such a journey. Burnes was put incharge of all these transactions, and it was planned that if the Amirs of Sind objected to his passage through Sind. He would say that there was a possibility of the carriage being sent to the Maharaja,

being worn out if sent on road. Therefore, its transaction through the river was necessary.

This shows, how in dishonest way the English were playing their game. Metcalf himself wrote later on that such a trick was "unworthy of our Government." Moreover, we learn on the authority of Mohan Lal about twenty years before, a similar present had already been sent to Ranjit Singh on road.[42] The excuse of the carriage's being worn out, therefore, was entirely fallacious.

Amirs as it was expected did object to the British move. And finally it was only on the threat of Ranjit Singh's forces, which incidently happened to be just nearby, in Dera Ghazi-Khan, that the Amirs gave their permission. Besides securing the threat of the Maharaja's forces, on the pretext of the necessity of the self-transaction of presents meant for him, the English secured a personal intervention of the Maharaja as well, who it is said, called the envoy of the Amirs to his presence and reprimanded him for the Amirs' behaviour. Ranjit Singh did all this, because he was already out to use any pretext for his designs against Sind. But little did he know, that in this case the British were firing their own gun against the Amirs, using so tactfully the shoulders of the ignorant Lahore Monarch. Ranjit Singh was flattered when Burnes brought the presents to his court, little knowing again, how bitter these sugar coated pills would be.

Besides bringing presents, Burnes is said to have made a casual reference to the possibility of opening the Indus and the Sutlej to navigation. Wade who was accomapanying Burnes, on his visit to the Darbar also brought with him a proposal to arrange an interview with Bentinck, the Governor-General of India, at Rupar, where Ranjit Singh would be received with all the pomp and show. The next day, the Governor-General would pay a return visit to Ranjit Singh on the latter's side of the border.

Although Ranjit was anxious to meet the Governor-General and thus impress upon his enemies of his superiority, for having such friendly relations with such a big power in India, he could not understand the purpose behind this invitation. He proposed that the Governor-General should pay him the first visit and then he would pay the return visit. But Burnes could never accept this proposal, because, as Principle writes, the policy had already been laid down

that "if contrary to expectation His Highness should persist in requiring the first visit, the negotiations must at once be broken off."[43]

Ranjit Singh conceded, but very reluctantly and this shows clearly that the interview was to be used to show that the Governor-General had the higher dignity.

The meeting between the Governor-General and the Maharaja was arranged to be held on 26th October, 1831. But till the last, writes Gordon, some of his Sardars were very averse to it, fearing kidnapping. Maharaja's French General, Allard, tried to allay his fears, and at last he "proceeded in state with a large force, encamping on his side of the river, the British camp being on the other. The night before he was to cross over to the British camp he suddenly changed his mind, having been again warned that he would act unwisely in leaving his own territory to meet the English on their ground.....Allard argued with his to allay his apprehensions, and offered to stake his head that nothing unpleasant would happen. The court astrologers were summoned: after consulting their mystic books they declared that the British were his sincere friends, and that the meeting would lead to more valuable friendship between the two states, but they also advised him to hold an apple in each hand, and on meeting the Governor-General to offer him one of these, keeping the other himself. If it was accepted the meeting would be favourable, and the visit could be carried out without the least fear. The next morning, when he crossed mounted on an elephant surrounded by his Sardars and escort of Allard's dragoons, on meeting Lord George Bentinck he presented the apple to him, which was at once accepted. Delighted at this good women, he stepped from his howdah into that of the Governor-General and proceeded to the audience tent, vivacious and charming everyone of his manners, full of inquiry about all he saw."[44] For the pomp that was displayed at this meeting, the occasion has been styled by some writers as the Indian "Field of the cloth of Gold."

But Ranjit Singh had already been deceived and stabbed at the back, so much apprehensive of which he was. Ranjit Singh, according to Latif, had invited the Governor-General during his meeting, for a joint action against Sind. But the latter refused telling him that they were not interested. While lulling the Maharaja thus to sleep writes Abdul Qadir[45] the Governor-General let him know little that just 4

days before this meeting, Pottinger had already been issued the instructions, as discussed below, to proceed to Sind and sign with the Amirs a commercial treaty.

When Burnes reported favourable on the suitability of the Indus navigation, the Governor-General decided to launch his project forthwith. Pottinger was sent to the Amirs with a detailed plan for Indus navigation. He was thoroughly educated, as to how he would proceed. He would take guarantees from the Amirs against obstructions to the trade through the river. And in return he would guarantee against any loss of their revenue by the diversion of trade from land route to the river. He would also make the Amirs realise, how their people would flourish. And if the Amirs yet objected Pottinger was to say that the Amirs had no right to violate the international law by depriving all the States Son the Indus of such trade benefits, only because they happened to occupy a small portion of it.[46]

These instructions were issued to Pottinger only 4 days before the meeting at Rupar, whereas it is discussed above, the Governor-General lulled the Maharaja so sweetly to sleep. Proceeding the planned way, Pottinger at the last long, did succeed in making the Amirs sign the Treaty on April 4, 1832. The essential feature of the Treaty was that the Amirs would permit the British to carry on their trade through the Indus, but that no permission would be given for the transaction of military stores, nor would they permit armed vessels through it. Further it was expressly laid down that no British merchant would be permitted to settle in Sind, and this shows clearly how distrustful the Amirs were of the British designs. A supplement to this Treaty, signed on April 22, transferred the final powers of deciding the levy of duties on the foreign goods from Amirs to the British.

All these developments, as according to Gough,[47] naturally aroused suspicion in the Maharaja's mind, and it is said, when he learnt of these transactions he could not sleep for several nights. Nor did he, writes Latif, "affect to conceal from the British officer (at Mithankot) the fact that the commercial projects of the British Government had compromised his political designs and operations West of Indus." When wade[48] visited him the next, he was not received as cordially as he used to be. Ranjit Singh's view was that by signing that commercial agreement with the Amirs, the British had violated

the Amritsar Treaty of 1809, and had interfered in the trans-Sutlej affairs. But the British view was that the application of that treaty ended, where Sutlej met the Indus, and below that therefore, they were perfectly within their rights to make friends as they liked. At last, however the sweet tongued agent, Wade, did succeed in appeasing the monarch.

After opening Indus to navigation, the next proposal was to open Sutlej for the purpose. For this Wade drought letters from the Governor-General, both for the Maharaja and Bhawal Khan, the Nawab of Bhawalpur. When enquired about, Wade argued that the Punjab was more prosperous when it was carrying on its trade with other countries and now again, if the Maharaja was a well wisher of his country, that trade should be revived, more particularly the trade of Kashmir, which was said once to have been so important. And for all this trade, he argued, the best route to Amritsar and other important centres would be these rivers, because the land routes were dangerous for their being infested with robbers and thieves.

Wade assured the Maharaja that he would get a proper share in the duties imposed on such trade, and finally on 26th December 1832, he did succeed in signing the agreement with the Maharaja, and thus in opening the Sutlej to navigation. Nawab of Bhawalpur, whose territory also lay on the Sutlej, was made to sign an agreement likewise, and thus it was, that the whole of the rivers of the Sutlej and the Indus lay open to the British to play their commercial and political games, as they had desired.

Second Phase

After signing these agreements, Wade suggested to the Governor-General that British officers should be stationed at several places on the line. He argued that the Sikhs, Sindhians and Daodpotras were hostile to one another, and if British officers were not stationed in their midst, their hostilities might hinder a smooth running of the trade. Secondly, by doing so, Ranjit Singh's intention to convert Mithankot into a part for the produce of his own country, as against that of Sind and others, would be foiled. Thirdly the British purpose behind all this project being political, he argued that the presence of British officers would facilitate the realisation of it. Fourthly, the line between

Mithankot and Shikarpur being at the merey of the Amirs of Sind, the British would be able to protect it. And lastly he forwarded that Mithankot being a central place, if a British officer was stationed there he would be able to control and regulate whole of the trade.

The Governor-General accepted these proposals, but to carry them into practice was not an easy affair. Amirs of Sind, more particularly, had their own apprehensions and they would not permit any English officer to be stationed in their country. Pottinger was sent to discuss the matter with them. But they could not budge from there position even an inch. When all the appeasements and threats failed, at last a compromise was struck and it was agreed that instead of a European, some native would be appointed as British officer in Sind. And thus was the line opened for trade.

Despite all the efforts, however this route could never become popular with merchants. Burnes was sent to Kabul to convince the Kabul merchants of its utility, but this mission too could not prove to be a good success and it was not long before, that this route, of the importance and utility of which, so much capital had been made, had to be closed.

The reasons for its failure were not far to seed. Of all the parties who signed this agreement, British alone were interested seriously in the project. But their action too was inspired more by political motives than commercial. Ranjit Singh, Bhawal Khan and Amirs of Sind, all showed their suspicion in the project; Amirs detained and delayed boats passing through their territories, and put all sorts of hinderances against the smooth running of the trade, despite repeated threats from the British. Thus, the only purpose solved by the opening of these rivers to navigation, was that the Russians and the Sikh designs towards Sind were checked and as Charles Masson writes in his 'Narrative of various journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Punjab and Kalat:'[49] "The results of the policy concealed under this pretext have been the introduction of troops into the countries on and beyond the river, and of some half dozen steamers on the stream itself, employed for warlike objects, not those of trade." But then as discussed above, this was the main motive of the English, and in this they were a success.

Shikarpur

Having thus established their commercial relations with Sind, it was now not difficult for the English to develop their political hold. In fact in the East, English politician had always followed the English merchant, and in this, Sind could be no exception. The question of Shikarpur facilitated their move.

Shikarpur, lying West of the Indus, below Mithankot, was a place known far and wide for its being an important commercial centre. Besides, it had a military importance as well, for it lay on way to Bolan Pass, and for the protection of this pass, military centre was always established at this place. Ranjit Singh wanted to occupy the city for the obvious reasons, which the English, again, would not permit.

Mazaris, a tribe of free-booters, inhabiting some territory South-West of Mithankot, at a few miles distance from it, carried their incursions alike in Sind, Bhawalpur and Lahore territories. But since they occupied the 'no man's land' between Sind and Punjab, the Amirs, despite their nominal suzerainty, could not control them. The incursions of the Mazaris in the Lahore territories increased by 1836, and Ranjit Singh decided to crush them once for all. Besides, taking an excuse for the losses he suffered due to their inroads, the Maharaja demanded Shikarpur from the Amirs. 'The British could have no reasonable objection to his occupying it. It lay to the West of the Sutlej-Indus, and, according to the treaty of 1809, they had agreed not to interfere with his affairs in trans-Sutlej territories.' The Amirs, however appealed to the British for help, and the latter were already waiting for such an opportunity. On November 25, 1839, a Treaty was signed between English and the Amirs. Under this Treaty, the Amirs were obliged to receive a British agent, who would be a medium of communication between the Maharaja and the Amirs. The Amirs would also withdraw their vakils from Lahore. And in return for this, the English agreed to defend Amirs' territories.

By signing this Treaty, as it is obvious, the Amirs signed their own death warrants. And it was now a clear writing on the wall, that it would not be long before their power would be thrown into the dust-bin of history and their country would be annexed. To Ranjit Singh too, of course, it was a bolt from the blue. The atmosphere at Lahore

was charged and the Sikh generals were anxious to try their hands against the English, for which they now felt, the last moment had arrived. In December 1636, however Wade was sent again to soothe the Maharaja, and the latter once again, despite an opposition from his Sardars, gave way. According to some writers, Ranjit Singh had actually sent some forces against the Amirs, in reply to which the English sent a small contingent under Wade, and requested the Maharaja to withdraws, which, of course he did. Latter on, when Wade paid his next visit at Lahore, it is said, Maharaja's Sardars such as Dhian Singh, became furious and knew out their swords, But the Maharaja cooled them by saying that if the English could defeat 2 lakh soldiers of the Marathas, their small army was no equal of them.

Dr. Ganda Singh forwards some definite arguments, as to why the Maharaja gave way. The British, it is said, were already in correspondence with Dost Mohammad of Afghanistan. In case of a hostility with the English, he would pounce upon Punjab. Moreover, the military strength of the Maharaja was only 20 per cent of the total strength of the English. And when all the valiant Marathas, Rajputs, Jats and Rohillas had fallen before the English, the Sikhs were no stronger.

This was one more diplomatic defeat of the Maharaja and it, writes N.K. Sinha, "enables us to realise how impotent Ranjit Singh was so far as his relations with the British Government were concerned." In fact by this time, as Baron Van Hugel wrote, " Ranjit Singh is as much independent of the British Indian Government as his position as a weaker neighbour can admit." It was wise of him, perhaps, that he preserved his patience and did not enter into wild ventures beyond his capabilities.

On 4th March 1838, the marriage of Ranjit Singh's grandson, Nau Nihal Singh, was celebrated, and the Maharaja, as usual, invited the Governor-General to attend. Sir Henry Fane was sent on the occasion and he was as cordially received as any such British agent had ever been received before, and it looked as if all the ripples on the ocean of Anglo-Sikh relations had died, and there was calmness again.

REFERENCES

1. Franklin's 'Shah Alum', pp. 175-78.
2. This is said to have been the last meeting of this Central Assembly of the Sikhs, which after this was dissolved by Ranjit.
3. Gordon 'The Sikhs', p. 91.
4. Griffin—'Ranjit Singh', p. 170.
5. Khnshwant Singh p. 58.
6. Gordon, 94.
7. Different version, however are given of this expedition of Ranjit Singh. According to one it was Rani who invited Ranjit Singh as explained above. According to the second, it was Raja Bhag Singh, who being threatened by the chiefs of Thanesar, Kythal and Rani Aus Kaur, invited Ranjit. According to the third Sahib Singh invited Ranjit for help against his queen and his son Karam Singh. The view expressed above, however seems to be more correct.
8. Ranjit Singh, pp. 64,65.
9. Payne, p. 81.
10. Mcorcraft, Travels, i. p. 94.
11. Griffin, p. 178.
12. Latif, p. 375.
13. As it is clear from the writings of Osborne, who visited Ranjit in 1838. Osborne writes: "The conduct of Ranjit Singh was so unsatisfactory,.....that it was deemed expedient to advance a body of troops under Colonel Ochterlony, to enforce the demands, and to support the negotiation of our agent." 'Ranjit Singh', p. 12.
14. Centenary Vol. of Ranjit Singh—Khalsa College Amritsar.
15. Ranjit Singh, p. 16.
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17. G. L. Chopra, Pb. Sovereign State.
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7

Metcalf's Mission to Lahore

The plan of aggressive French designs on the growing political and commercial supremacy of the East India Company in the Indian sub-continent and Ranjit Singh's territorial expansion in the Trans-Sutlej, Cis-Sutlej and the hilly regions of north-west of India were seriously viewed by the British rulers who had established their sway up to Delhi in the opening years of the ninteenth century.

Indeed, 'Ranjit Singh continued steadily to pursue his career of usurpations on the eastern and southern banks of the Sutlej, and his authority in the Punjab was so completely established, that it became essential to the policy of the British Government in India to enter into amicable relations with his court, and to accomplish this purpose in the year 1808, Mr. Metcalfe was dispatched to Lahore.'[1]

Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, son of Major Thomas Metcalfe, a Director of the East India Company and Member of Parliament, landed at Calcutta on 1 January 1801. He was barely sixteen years old. By nature he was studious, reserved and thoughtful, and prior to his coming to India, he spent a few years of his educational career at Eton. He indeed 'found at Eton his deepest and most happiness...(His) Eton days were happy in friendships, and in abounding itellectual activity. He never willingly left his books.'[2]

Metcalfe's voyage to India took full six months and on the first day of the new century (January 1, 1801)— as if winds and tides had chosen the date of his arrival, to symbolise the destiny which was to make him the most influential single actor in the immense events of the next generation in India—Metsealfe entered the Hugli, the pilot having come on board the previous evening.

'He was not to see England again for thirty-seven years. His age was not quite sixteen, an average age for the men who were entering India as its rulers, and considerably above that of many. Very few, reading the story, of the British in India, realise that it was the custom for our ancestors to start on their careers when today they might almost still be at preparatory schools. Warren Hasting's angry reference to 'mere boys' who were 'heavy-handed rulers of the people' is taken as mere rhetoric (a luxury Hastings rarely indulged in), where it was literal fact. The actual *education* of India's rulers took place, not in England or Scotland, but in a sense of shifting and dissolving empires. Their schools were battles and intrigues, and the school-masters were adventure and aliens.'[3]

Thus Matcalfe arrived in India in the full between two wars. Mysore had already fallen and Tipu Sultan was no more on the scene; the most decisive clash between the expanding political and commercial interests of the East India Company's government and the Marathas, a well-organised clan of dauntless warriors was plainly to come. Indeed, the Governor-General was resolved to regularise their relations on the basis of Maratha subordination, and to force a chance of doing this.

Metcalfe was the second to the four envoys to set out for Sind, Persia and Kabul. He left Delhi on 5 August 1808 with a clerical staff and a small escort.[4] His staff included a *munshi, Maulvi* Hafiz-ud-din whom he had known for some years and had much confidence in him, and five clerks to assist him during his stay in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a most energetic, brave, fearless, and ambitious Sikh ruler of the Punjab.

'Metcalfe's salary was to be Rs. 2000 a month. He was to arrange with Seton for money supplies and presents, escort, servants and secretarial staff. The official escort was to include a competent military surveyor, to examine the route and keep a journal, while careful of such precautions as "the ignorance and suspicious' of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs should render expendient. General Hewett, the Commander-in-Chief, thought two such officers necessary—an engineer as well as a survey officer, 'to view the country with a military eye'....And 'the Rajah of Lahore' was informed that a

'Gentleman of Rank' would move forward to call on him as swiftly as possible....'[5]

On his appointment as envoy to the Lahore Durbar, Charles Metcalfe expressed sentiments of gratitute and assurance of efficient performance of his duties assigned to him.[6]

'I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23th ultimo informing me that the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in-Council has been pleased to appoint me as the Envoy to the Raja of Lahore and conveying instructions for the guidance of my conduct in the proposed mission.

'I cannot find words to express the various direction to which the contents of your despatch give rise. I must take the liberty, however to request that you will assure the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in-Council that I am duly impressed with a profused sense of the high honour conferred in me in this arrangement and of the importance of the objects to which it is directed and that no exertions shall be wanting on my part to do justice to the confidence which His Lordship has been pleased to repose in me and to promote to the best of my humble ability the interests committed to my charge.'

On receipt of the news of the appointment of British envoy to his court, Ranjit Singh wrote a letter to the British Resident in Delhi to whom he expressed his sentiments of cordiality and friendliness to the British government on taking such a step was[7] my anixous desire to proceed to Hardwar at the late fair for the purpose of performing my religious ceremonies, as also for that of having a personal meeting with you. But every business has its destined moment. I was obliged by affairs of a pressing nature in which the interests of others were involved to defer the sanction of my plan. The deputation of the gentleman in question to this quarter teeming with friendship to convey assurances of amity and goodwill in conformity to the orders of the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General-in-Council is a source of the most satisfaction to my friendly heart.'

After a few days, Edmonstone sent comprehensive instructions to Metcalfe and advised him on the conduct he should exhibit in his relation with Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[8]

'I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch no 2, dated the 17th July soliciting instructions for the guidance of your conduct under the occurrence of certain cases which you have supposed.'

The Governor-General-in-Council is sensible of the advantage which would be derived from your continual attendance on Ranjit Singh in the event of his proceeding on any military expedition which may occasion his protracted absence from his capital, more especially if any negotiation shall be finding at the time. But it is equally certain that the presence of an accredited British officer in his camp would be liable to the misrepresentation which you have foreseen. This would be particularly likely to be the case in the supposition of Ranjit Singh's arms being directed against any of Sikh chiefs on this side of the Sutlej whose own fears and jealousy would easily suggest to them the suspicion of a participation or at least an acquiescence in the designs of Ranjit Singh.'

'Upon the whole His Lordship-in-Council is of opinion that it would be better if you should not attend Rajah Ranjit Singh on such expeditions as those now underconsideration without special orders to that effect. It will always be in your favour to join his army after it shall have marched, if such a measure should appear to be desirable.'

'It is not probable that the departure of Ranjit Singh on any enterprise will be as sudden to as to preclude you from referring to government for instructions, for the guidance of your conduct in the particular occasion when government will be able to determine with a knowledge of all the facts of the case whether the public interests will be promoted or impeded by your accompanying the Rajah or in other words, whether the advantage to be expected from your presence in his camp will be such, as to render it admissible to disregard the effect it may provide in the mind of the neighbouring chiefs.'

'His Lordship-in-Council desires that you will, in all such cases, apply to government for orders, reporting at the same time, every circumstance which can tend to assit the judgment of the Governor-General-in-Council.'

'If Ranjit Singh shows interest to you and his wish for you to accompany him before your receipt of the instructions of government,

it will be easy for you to decline a compliance on the ground of your orders not providing for the use of his quitting his capital but that you may expect to receive the directions of the Governor-General-in-Council on the subject, as soon as the Rajah's intentions, shall be known to him.'

Matcalfe was to establish a *dak* between Delhi and Amristar. He was to get information of all the countries between Persia and the Jumuna, particularly of those between Persia and the Sutlej-full geographical and topographical knowledge, data as to supplies and roads and political conditions. He was to findout everything about Ranjit Singh, his resources, the constitution of his government, relations with other states, nature and details of his correspondence with Holkar and other chiefs of Hindustan, and above all, the number, description and character of his troops. He was to send back the fullest confidential reports, both to Seton[9] and the Secretary of the secret and political department in Calcutta, and to attend to any suggestion which either gave him.

Thus the main task of the British envoy was to counteract the designs of the French. Besides, countering the aggressive policy of Ranjit Singh against the Cis-Sutlej states was an additional motive for deputing the mission. He was, in fact, 'to woo the great Rajah to an alliance, while refusing him the increase of territory on which he had set his heart.'[10]

The British government thought that Ranjit Singh, during negotiations with its envoy, might demand some concessions before agreeing points realised by Metcalfe. It was its apprehension that he might ask for British alliance for other wars or his involvement with other Company's government had no connection with states that were engaged in schemes of conquest in the Indian sub-continent.

The objects of all these missions in Lord Minto's own words were, 'to conciliate the princes...to obtain their consent to the passage of our troops through their country, or their admission into their territories, for the purpose of opposing a French army in their projected invasion of Hindustan...to establish such defensive engagements with these governments as may obtain the co-operation, or at least their friendly aid and assistance, to our military operations and to our cause

generally....also to remove from the minds of these princes any suspicions regarding the attitude of the British Government towards them and to plant the seeds of confidence and union.'[11]

The monsoon clogged Matcalfe's path and put him to 'a circuitous route.' But he entered enthusiastically on his task, seeing in his official instructions nothing amiss. Although he had to pass through territories of chiefs whose political status was as yet doubtful, he was quick to discover the political condition of the whole region.

The British entourage arrived at Patiala on 22 August where they were received by Imam-ud-din, one of the advisers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The British envoy was able to view Ranjit Singh's 'favour and kindness to all' though Raja Sahib Singh whose uncle also cordially received him and requested him to break him journey. Sahib Singh of Patiala made a dramatic gesture by presenting keys of his citadel to the Englishman, begging him to return them to him to symbolise British protection over Patiala.

The British envoy had thus personally observed how submissive the Cis-Sutlej *Rajas* and other chiefs were to him. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh 'had no cause to be attracted to the side of the English whose interests he knew were adverse to his own, so far as the Cis-Sutlej states, the choicest object of his ambition were concerned.'

'Taught to regard the British Government as his natural enemy and the obstacle to the extent of his conquests, Ranjit Singh might fear that the East India Company planned a conspiracy or coalition against him.'

'Rumours were already afloat concerning the sinister designs of the *firangee* mission whose objects Metcalfe had not disclosed. The atmosphere around the British camp began to grow tense, and the local *sardars* indulged in a whispering campaign.' In this context, Metcalfe reported to his government that his mission had been viewed with much suspicion and its reception lacked signs of friendship and cordiality.

'In brief', the envoy wrote, 'it would appear that I am regarded as a dangerous enemy to be guarded against, rather than the envoy of a friendly state charged with most amicable duties.'

Seldom perhaps in Anglo-Indian diplomatic annals, was so delicate a task entrusted to one so young in years. At the age of 23,

Charles Metcalfe had already won the approbation of the Government as 'an excellent public servant' and his appointment to lead the mission to Lahore showed that the Governor-General reposed great confidence in his character, ability and local knowledge for the purpose. He had served as an Assistant to the Resident at Delhi and had access to the political correspondence with the Sikh states. He combined this knowledge with the information gained at first hand during his negotiations with Ranjit Singh in composing his official despatches to the Government of India. 'Consequently, his voluminous despatches from Ranjit Singh's court exhibit a rare diplomatic skill in grasping the true character and resources of the Sikh country; the political, military and financial state of the State of Lahore; the character of Ranjit Singh, the extent of his ambitions and dominions; the nature of his relations with other states; his habits, prejudices and caprices and finally, his real disposition towards, the British Government.'[12]

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4. Metcalfe to Edmonstone 6 August 1808, For Deptt. Sec and Separate Cons. 43.
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8

Conquests and Annexations of Ranjit Singh

(A) BEFORE 1805

Immediately after Ranjit Singh assumed power, Zaman Shah, as discussed above, led his fourth invasion into India. During his first three invasions, we do not hear of Ranjit Singh having played any important part against him. But all of a sudden, during his fourth invasion, Ranjit Singh is mentioned in the contemporary records as one of the most important chiefs of the Punjab. The British newswriter at Delhi addressed the authorities at Calcutta just this time thus "Ranjit Singh of Gujrat (it should be Gujranwala) has assembled about 10/12 thousand horses. He and many other Sardars were attempting to hem in the army of the invader."[1] The particular mention of Ranjit Singh's name is noteworthy. Later on, in 1827, Ranjit Singh himself told Wade that during Zaman Shah's occupation of Lahore, every night he used to attack the invader's army, with a handful of Sikh soldiers to harass him.

Zaman Shah had occupied Lahore, and to meet this danger, it is said, the twelve sikh misls burried their differences and tried to come forward as a united power. But Zaman Shah seems to have been a diplomatic genius and following the later British technique of 'Divide and Rule,' he made his wazir Wafadar Khan try to present Khilats to some important Sikh chiefs. Ranjit Singh was one of those important chiefs whom he succeeded in winning over. But unfortunately for Zaman Shah, in the midst of his victories in Punjab, he was called back to Kabul due to the sudden rebellion of his half brother Mahmud. In haste, it is said, he lost many of his important guns in the Jhelum, which at that time was in spate. Ranjit Singh dug them out for him. Zaman Shah knew that Lahore at that time was under the control of

Bhangi chiefs, who had fled the city at the time of his invasion, and it was indeed, hold some writers, a masterstroke of his stratagem that as a reward for Ranjit Singh's services he appointed him on his own behalf to the governorship of Lahore. Zaman Shah's purpose was possibly two-fold. Firstly that by this action he might be able to consolidate his half victory on Lahore, and if Ranjit Singh was not too ambitious, he would work in Punjab as his subordinate; and secondly that by appointing Ranjit Singh the governor of Lahore, he would create a definite source of trouble between Ranjit Singh and other Sikh chiefs who would naturally be jealous of him, and thus divide them among themselves thus making it easy for him to fish in the troubled water at any time.

But some writers do not subscribe to this view. According to them the people of Lahore had already been tired of the tyrannical rule of the Bangi sardars and that the latter had made themselves yet more unpopular when they fled the city at the face of Zaman Shah's invasion. The citizens, therefore resisted when the Bhangi Sardars attempted to re-occupy Lahore after Zaman Shah's retreat and invited Ranjit Singh instead to occupy the city.

The story of Zaman Shah's granting Lahore to Ranjit Singh can not be accepted without reservation. Zaman Shah did lose his guns in the Jhelum river, and Ranjit Singh dug them out for him. Admitted. But there is no definite proof that Zaman Shah appointed Ranjit Singh as governor of Lahore in return, or made a grant of the city to him, as some writers hold. The facts that we get from the contemporary British records rather contradict this. Thus a document dated April 1800 reads: "Ranjit Singh has lately delivered to Zaman Shah's vakil 15 pieces of cannon which the Durani prince lost last year in a retreat."[2]

It is clear that the guns were returned to Zaman Shah at the earliest, in the begining of the year 1800, and Zaman Shah could grant Lahore to Ranjit Singh only after that. But we know from the recorded facts that Ranjit Singh had occupied Lahore definitely on 16th July 1799. This may disprove that Ranjit Singh got Lahore as a grant from Zaman Shah. Nor can we overlook the fact that Zaman Shah's victory on Lahore was only perfunctory and that too was lost when he had to retreat in haste. That he granted Lahore to Ranjit Singh when he did not possess it himself, looks meaningless.

We, therefore accept the view that the Bhangi rulers of Lahore being oppressive and tyrannical, had fled the city when Zaman Shah invaded, but returned and reoccupied it after his retreat. The leading citizens of Lahore sent a petition to Ranjit Singh inviting him to occupy Lahore, and promising to give him, whatever help they themselves could give to the effect. Latif gives the names of some important persons who signed the petition. They were Hakim Hakam Rai, Bhai Gurbaksh Singh, Mian Ashok Mohammad, Mian Mohkam Din, Mohammad Bakar, Mohmmad Tahir, Mufti Mohamed Mokarram, and Mir Shadi, The petition was sent to Ranjit Singh 26 days after Zaman Shah's retreat.[3]

Another factor which is said to have led the citizens sign this application was the rumours of the attack upon Lahore by Nizamuddin of Kasur. Nizamuddin had already proposed to Zaman Shah to let him occupy Lahore for him, in return for an annual payment of five lakh rupees. But Zaman Shah had refused it.

Beside sending a petition to Ranjit Singh, the citizens also sent a separate petition to Sada Kaur requesting her support for the purpose. Ranjit Singh on receiving the petition, deputed an officer to proceed to Lahore immediately and ascertain if the citizens were serious in their proposal. On the favourable report of this officer, alongwith Sada Kaur, Ranjit Singh marched to Amritsar at the head of a strong force of 25,00 soldiers, on the pretext of a usual visit to the holy place, wherefrom in one march, he reached the suburbs of Lahore. On hearing this news, of the three Bhangi rulers, Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh, who held the city jointly, the latter two fled. Chet Singh prepared to accept the challenge. He was informed that Ranjit Singh was marching upon the Delhi gate of the city, and thither he proceeded forthwith. But on reaching there, he learnt that he had been deceived by his informers, and that Ranjit Singh had rather entered the city through the Lahori Gate, the doors of which were opened by the citizens, in complicity with Ranjit Singh. He marched back immediately and reached the gates of the fort just in time, and shut himself up inside it. Had he been late just by a few moments, Ranjit Singh's forces would have entered the fort and the game would have been finished. This incidence, however did not delay Ranjit Singh's occupation of the fort for long. For the next morning

finding the treachery and discord at work amongst the citizens all around him, he surrendered himself to Ranjit Singh, on the condition of a safe conduct and grant of suitable allowance for his family.

Ranjit Singh willingly agreed and treated Chet Singh with consideration. The city was occupied, and orders were issued promising protection to all, and to bring about the normal conditions and a confidence among the people, he made over a large number of unserviceable guns and military stores to the artizans, against handsome payments. "These measures had the desired effect. The people were reassured and in a few days the town became as busy as ever."[4]

The occupation of Lahore was a great victory for the prince, indeed, and he got it easily too, because in his venture, he was assisted materially by his allies. And then, besides the citizens of Lahore being in favour of his occupation, the Bhangi Sardars themselves were only worthless debauchs Sunk and engrossed in mutual jealousies and the pleasures of the medieval zenanas their territories were too much scattered under different sardars to come together in the time of emergency. And then Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, the inveterate enemy of Ranjit Singh and Sada Kaur, on whose help indeed, they could count at such a moment, was just too old and infirm to move. Ranjit Singh was lucky.[5]

Battle of Bhasin, 1800

The occupation of Lahore is a landmark in the life and carrier of Ranjit Singh. It being the political capital of Punjab, its importance at that time could not be exaggerated. Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore gave a shock not only to some important sikh chiefs, but also to Nizamuddin of Kasur, who had once already "offered to Zaman Shah to hold the Punjab for him and pay him five lakhs per annum." Zaman Shah refused. When Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore, Nizamuddin also was naturally shocked. Contracting an alliance with Sahib Singh of Gujrat, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, Nizamuddin made a common cause with them, and they collected an army at the village Bhasin, a few miles east of Lahore, under the leadership of Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar. Ranjit Singh also advanced and encamped his forces opposite to those of his

enemies. But for two months the things lingered on, and none could dare take initiative in attacking the other. In the meanwhile, to the good luck of Ranjit Singh, mutual jealousies developed in the camp of his enemies, and when in the midst of this confusion, Gulab Singh Bhangi died of the excessive indulgence in Bhangi,[6] they dispersed forthwith without giving battle to Ranjit. It was indeed a great political and psychological victory for Ranjit Singh, who now found himself definitely on road to creating a standard of monarchy in Punjab. The Sikh chiefs once thus dispersed, could never meet again to challenge his power.

Near Batala a battle was fought between Sada Kaur and Jodh Singh, son of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Ranjit Singh aided the former, and the result was the total discomfiture of the Ramgarhia. After these events, Ranjit Singh now Lord of Lahore, made his triumphant entry into the city. He was received with great honour by the leading citizens, who presented nazranas and received rich khilats from their new sovereign.[7]

"A king had now appeared among the lions. Lahore was ever after left in his undisturbed possession. In the following year, 1801, he formally assumed the title of Maharaja, going through the Hindu equivalent of a coronation ceremony, proclaimed that he was now to be styled "Sarkar", signifying power and state, established a mint, and issued in token of sovereignty a coin in his name bearing the inscription, 'Hospitality, the sword, victory, and conquest unfailing from Guru Gobind Singh and Nanak.'[8]

The sikhs thus, under Ranjit Singh, had now reached nationhood. The time was not far ahead when Khalsa would be a territorial power and the Afghan flood of invasions would be rolled back across the Indus, thus fulfilling the "prophecy of the martial Guru Govind Singh."

Occupies Some Smaller States

Before attempting to take revenge against his enemies of Bhasin, Ranjit Singh now decided to occupy some smaller states and consolidate his power. Ranjit Singh had learnt of the riches of the ruler of Jammu, and the finance was what he needed at that time for the construction of his political edifice. He attacked the state, realizing a

cash amount of Rs. 20,000 and forcing the chief to be his feudatory. On his way to Jammu, he also conquerred Narwal and Mirowal. Dul Singh, the chief of Akalgarh, who in alliance with Sahib Singh of Gujrat was intriguing against Ranjit Singh, was next defeated and taken prisoner in 1801. It was only on mediation of a holy man, Baba Keshra Singh, that the Akalgarh chief was released. But fortunately for Ranjit Singh, again, Dul Singh died shortly after this, and he annexed his state forthwith, leaving a jagir of two villages for his widow.

After the arrest of Dul Singh, Ranjit Singh had desired also to crush the power of Sahib Singh of Gujrat. But the intervention of some other important person saved the latter. Shortly after, however Sahib Singh now began to intrigue against Ranjit Singh, in alliance with Nizamuddin of Kasur. Ranjit Singh sent an expedition against them, under Fateh Singh Kalianwala. Nizamuddin could save himself only by giving his brother as hostage to the Maharaja but Sahib Singh escaped again. It was later only in 1809, that Sahib Singh was defeated by Fakir Aziz-din and his estates were annexed.

Next Ranjit Singh directed his attention towards Kangra, where Sada Kaur was fighting unsuccessfully against the Raja of Noorpur and Sansar Chand Kutoch of Kangra. "The latter fled to his own country on the approach of the Maharaja, and he having taken the fort of Nuoshuhur from the Noorpur Rajah, bestowed it with all its revenues on Sada Koonwur."[9]

On his return from the hills, Ranjit Singh attacked the fort of Sujanpur near Pathankot, and levelled it to the ground. Budh Singh and Sangat Singh, who held the fort, had carried military exploits all around the territory. From them Ranjit Singh extorted four large pieces of ordnance. Next, establishing his police post at Sujanpur Ranjit Singh captured the neighbouring districts of Dharamkot, Bahrampur and Sukalgarh.

From here Ranjit Singh proceeded to Pindi Bhatian, across the river Chenab, took its fort and bestowed it on Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. From here, he came to the fort of Bund, which he besieged for two months. It was surrendered to Ranjit Singh. Next, a tribute was realised from Zamindars of the Dhanni country, famous for its breed of horses and from here he returned to Lahore with 400 fine horses.

Alliance with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia

The interests of Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia at this time were to certain extent common. Sansar Chand of Kangra was considered by Fateh Singh to be his enemy, and for Ranjit Singh of course he was rival whose influence in the Northern hills must be excluded. Fateh Singh was not on friendly relations with Ramgarhias, and Ranjit Singh too was their enemy for the part they had played against Ranjit Singh in the battlefield of Bhasin. Moreover, Fateh Singh could count upon Ranjit Singh's help in the suppression of some of his own rebellious vassals. Nor was Sada Kaur friendly towards Ramgarhias or towards Sansar Chand of Kangra. The Bhangi chiefs of Gujrat and Amritsar were considered to be common enemies by all the three—Ranjit Singh, Sada Kaur and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Clearly thus, their interests to a great extent lay together. Ranjit Singh exchanged turbans with Fateh Singh, at the sacred place of Taran Taran, thus establishing with him a perpetual friendship. Sada Kaur being already with him thus the resources of the three misls, the Sukerchakia, Kanheya and the Ahluwalia, were pooled together. But Ranjit Singh being the most influential among them, the other two chiefs proved only to be tools which he used to realise his expansionist ambitions.

Conquest of Daska and Chiniot

After having thus strengthened his hands, Ranjit Singh marched, accompanied by Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, upon Daska. Its fort was reduced. Its killadar having fled, Ranjit Singh established a police post in it.

Ranjit Singh conquered Chiniot, which was being ruled by Jassa Singh, the son of Karam Singh. This was done with the help of his friend Fateh Singh, who was given the territories of Bhattian and Dhana across the Jhelum, as his share. Next the combined forces of the allies marched upon Kasur, Nizamuddin, the ruler of which was said to have plundered some of Ranjit Singh's camel flocks, while he was busy with Chiniot. Nizamuddin after a small resistence paid heavy nazrana to the allies and thus saved his life.

Soon after, Ranjit Singh marched into Jullundur Doab plundering and making annexations. He proceeded to Phagwara in the Doab,

which was held by a rich widow of one Chuhar Mal, forced her to retire to Hardwar and occupied her territory, which was bestowed upon Fateh Singh Ahluwalia.

Then in 1803, Ranjit Singh decided to try his hands against Muzaffar Khan of Multan. But the latter met him at a distance of about 40 miles from Multan and by making large presents made the Maharaja turn back from his territory. Next Ranjit Singh made his power felt in Sahiwal and Gujrat, which belonged to the Kabul kingdom. His next target was Ahmed Khan of Jhang, who was said to have been in league with the Afghan ruler to whom he sent all the important informations regarding Ranjit's activities. After a stiff resistance, Ahmed Khan agreed to pay Ranjit a heavy annual tribute.

Ranjit Singh now advanced in the North-West, up to Rawilpindi, and made the bars of Karlan and Kathia between Ravi and Chenab; the bars of Sahiwal between Chenab and Jhelum; and the regions of Ahmadabad and Khusab, pay him tribute. His next target was Sansar Chand of Kangra who had been trying to occupy Jullundur Doab, after Hoshiarpur and Bijwara fell into his hands. Ranjit expelled him from the latter two places and checked his designs on Jullundur Doab.

The most important of his conquests after Lahore was Amritsar, which according to Griffin, Gunningham and Latif was conquerred in 1802. But the more reliable account of Sohan Lal who wrote the diary of Ranjit's Darbar says that Amritsar was conquerred in 1805. The Bhangi ruler Gulab Singh of Amritsar was one of the chiefs who took part against Ranjit at Bhasin. He had died and his minor son Gurdit Singh was being looked after by his widow Mai Sukhan, who also managed the state affairs. In order to have a pretext for attack Ranjit Singh demanded the famous gun Zam-Zam, which had been given to his grand father Charat Singh by the Afghan ruler in 1764, but was now in the possession of Mai Sukhan. The latter refused to part with it. Some historians say that had Mai Sukhan heeded the advice of Jodh Singh, the son of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and handed over the gun to Ranjit Singh, she would have established friendly relations with him and saved herself like the Ahluwalia Sardar. But this is doubtful. Amritsar being the religious capital of Sikhs, Ranjit knew that his power would never be consolidated without the occupation of this city. Any way, this pretext worked. Ranjit invaded and occupied the city

after a resistance of only two hours, says Sohan Lal. The Bhangi chiefs fled to the protection of Ramgarhia Sardar.

Thus by 1805, Lahore lay prostrate at his feet. Amritsar studded his crown. Kangra, Chiniot, Kasur and Multan were subdued or weakened, and Ranjit Singh with the power of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Sada Kaur at his command was strong enough to enter into bigger games, when his attention was suddenly diverted towards the east, where the English were making their presence felt. There was a lull[10] for sometime, in his violent activities in the Punjab. But this was only short-lived. Circumstances changed soon after 1807, and more particularly after 1809 when the treaty of Amritsar between the English and the Sikhs was signed. And the Maharaja busied himself again in his career of conquests and annexations.

(B) AFTER 1805

Kasur 1807

After capturing Pasrur and Chamba on the death of Nar Singh, the chief of these territories in the early part of the year 1807, the Maharaja turned his attention once again towards Kasur. Nizamuddin its ruler had been assassinated and his brother Kutbuddin had now come to power. Early in 1807, the Maharaja had been informed that Kutbuddin had entered into conspiracy with Muzaffar Khan of Multan and that both together, collecting a good number of ghazis, were preparing to create troubles for the Maharaja.[11] Moreover, Kutbuddin was carrying on all sorts of persecutions against the Sikhs inhabiting his territory. To confirm the intelligence that the Maharaja got and to find out for himself the sort of treatment the Nawab was meeting out to the Sikhs, Ranjit Singh sent Fakir Aziz-ud-din to meet the ruler of Kasur. The Fakir, however did not get the hospitality from Kasur that he deserved and was rather condemned for his being in the service of the Sikhs.

On hearing this and also holding the view that the "subjugation of the Pathan colonists would tend materially to the advancement of his own prestige and popularity amongst the Khalsa"[12] the Maharaja organised a formidable expedition under his own and that of Jodh Singh's command and invaded the territory on February 10, 1807.

Kutbuddin met him with his Ghazis out side the town, and here two battles were fought, the victory in both of them remaining with the Khalsa. The Nawab fled the battlefield and alongwith many Ghazis, shut himself up inside his fort which had already been well stored with munitions of war and provisions. The fort was besieged, and bombardment of the walls with cannons started. The siege lasted for one month. One night a mine was laid beneath a wall of the fort, with the bursting of which the wall was breached. The Khalsa forces entered the fort and once again a bloody hand to hand fight ensued between Sikhs and the Ghazis, but ultimately the Ghazis were routed and the fort was occupied by the Sikhs. Kutbuddin was arrested when he was just making an effort to fly away, and was brought before the Maharaja. The Maharaja questioned him as to why he had violated the treaty, but on his humble submission and begging to be pardoned, the Maharaja granted him the territory of Mamdot, on the opposite bank of the Sutlej as Jagir, "subject to his supplying 100 horsemen for service when required." Fatteh Khan, the son of Nizamu-ud-din and nephew of the chief was granted a jagir at Marup, in the Gurgaon district, subject to the same military conditions imposed upon his uncle and whole of the country was occupied by the Maharaja, placing it temporarily under Sardar Nihal Singh Attariwala.

Early in 1809, the Maharaja set out to subdue some hill states. The fort of Pathankot, the kiladar of which fled at the sight of the Sikh forces, was the first to be reduced. Next the Maharaja marched towards Jasrota, but its ruler met the Maharaja at a distance from the territory, and made him rich presents and accepted his submission. The Maharaja confirmed the ruler in his possession, and after staying, therefore some days, set out to invade Chamba. The ruler of Chamba sent his agent to meet the Maharaja on the way. A large nazrana was paid to the Maharaja and Chamba also accepted his submission, promising to pay a tribute of Rs. 8,000 a year. A similar amount was fixed as tribute on the Raja of Basoli.

The Maharaja next moved down the hils, and convened a grand darbar on the plains adjoining them. All the tributary chiefs were invited to attend. All did so making rich presents to the Maharaja except Sardar Jiwan Singh of Sialkot and Sahib Singh of Gujrat, who according to Latif, "refused to comply with the order, less from a spirit

of rebellion than from fear of treachery." After the Darbar was over, the Maharaja marched against Sialkot to punish his audacity. The city was taken by storm, but Jiwan Singh shut himself up in his fort with his guns and about one thousand fighting men. The fort was closely besieged, after seven days, a number of cannons were moved before a gate of the fort, where they fired all atonce. After sometime the gate was battered down, thus enabling the Maharaja's forces to enter it. Jiwan Singh was put in chains and the Maharaja left for Gujrat. Sahib Singh of Gujrat, however had heard of the plight of Jiwan Singh and sent his agent with rich presents to meet the Maharaja on the way and accept his submission on his own conditions. Thus a treaty was signed between the Maharaja and Sahib Singh and Gujrat became tributary to him. Next he marched on Akhnur, Alam Khan the ruler of which having paid heavy nazrana, was reinstated on his territory. Sheikhupura was attacked like-wise and taken.

Kangra

To dominate the hill states between Sutlej and Ravi it was essential that Ranjit Singh should occupy Kangra. Previous attempts of Sansar Chand, the ruler of Kangra to occupy Hoshiarpur having failed, he was now trying to occupy the eastern hill states. He attacked Kahlur, the chief of which appealed to Nepal and thus Sansar Chand was sandwitched between the two powers of the Gurkhas and the Sikhs. The Gurkhas defeated Sansar Chand at Mahal Mori in 1806 and pressed on for Kangra. Sansar Chand was now forced to make an appeal to Ranjit Singh for help, but the latter demanded the fort of Kangra in return, which Sansar Chand naturally could not agree to. But his appeal to Jaswant Rao Holkar also having gone in vain, he approached Ranjit Singh again in 1809, agreeing to his conditions. Ranjit Singh sent his famous General, Muhkam Chand, to help Sansar Chand against the Nepalese, but with strong instructions that he should be careful of Sansar Chand's diplomacy. Muhkam Chand reached Kangra, and demanded that the fort should be handed over to him before they fought against the Nepalese. Sansar Chand hesitated and promising to cede the fort after the expulsion of Gurkhas from his territory, he sent his son Anurodh Chand to Muhkam Chand as a hostage. Muhkam Chand referred the case back to Ranjit Singh, but

the latter refused to agree to this scheme. In the meanwhile in connection with the mission of Metcalf to Ranjit Singh, a delicate situation developed in the Anglo-Sikh relations, to forestall which, Muhkam Chand was recalled by the Maharaja.

Thus left in the lurch, Sansar Chand approached Amar Singh Thapa, the ruler of Nepal direct, and promising to cede the fort to him instead, he took his permission to take out his family. But after bringing his family to a safer place, instead of handing over the fort to Nepal, he put his brother in it with four month's provision and closed its gates. Ranjit Singh could not tolerate this duplicity of Sansar Chand, and sent Sada Kaur to do the needful. Sada Kaur played a trick. Seating the boy Anurodh Chand on an elephant; she proceeded towards the fort, demanded the keys, they being refused, she made the boy order for them. The gates were thus opened and Ranjit Singh's forces occupied the fort.[13] Thus "Sansar Chand was foiled and Amar Singh retreated across the Sutlej loudly exclaiming that he had been grossly duped."[14]

Gurkhas

Amar Singh Thapa, the ruler of Nepal had been negotiating with Ranjit Singh even before the fall of Kangra. But no agreement seems to have been reached between the two powers. When Kangra fell into the hands of the Sikhs and in alliance with the hill chiefs, the Sikhs cut off the line of communication of the Nepal forces, they had to purchase their way back home from Ranjit Singh by paying him one lakh rupees. In the East Nepalese had already been defeated by the Chinese, and now defeated in the West by the Sikhs, the Gurkhas began their expansionist policy in the South, thus resulting in the Anglo-Nepalese war.

The Dhallewali Misl which lay just on the bank of Sutlej in the trans-Sutlej area, was being ruled by its sardar, Tara Singh Gheba. So long as Tara Singh lived, Ranjit Singh remained on friendly terms with him and we learn that this friendship was so thick that Tara Singh even accompanied Ranjit Singh in some of his exploits. But when Tara Singh died in 1807, just at the time his body was being cremated, says Cunningham, Ranjit Singh's forces reached the place and attempted to occupy the territory. Tara Singh's widow took up the

sword bravely in her own hand, but was defeated in the battle at Rahon, and her state was annexed. This added to Ranjit Singh's annual income by about 4 lakh rupees. Some of the historians have bitterly criticised Ranjit Singh on the way he occupied this territory.

Similarly, Bhagat Singh, the chief of Karor Singhia or Panjgarhia Misl was defeated and his State annexed.

Faizalpuria Misl occupying some area on both the bands of Sutlej, was being ruled by Budh Singh. Diwan Muhkam Chand, accompanied by Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia invaded the misl. Budh Singh took refuge in his territories South of the river, but that on its North, including Jullundur Doab, Haitpur and Patti was annexed.

Hariana and some surrounding country in the Jullundur Doab had been held by Bhagat Singh, who dominated the cis-Sutlej affairs for a considerable time. After his death, his territory was attacked in 1809, and all his trans-Sutlej possessions were annexed by Ranjit Singh. His widows, Ram Kaur and Raj Kaur, retained some of their territory in the cis-Sutlej area.

Nakkai Misl was taken in 1810. The Maharaja had married a Nakkai girl in 1802, who became the mother of his only son. "But this alliance", writes Griffin, "did not do the relations any good. When Kahn Singh, the nephew of Rani Raj Kaur, became the head of the family in 1807, the Maharaja tried to induce him to come and reside at court. But Kahn, knew that he would not be allowed to leave again, Vestigia nulla retrorsum, and stoutly declined the honour. This did not save him, for the Maharaja annexed all his estates, which were too close to Lahore, Kasur, Chunian and Gogaira, to be successfully defended."[15]

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had been a common enemy of the allies—Ranjit Singh, Fateh Singh and Sada Kaur. When Ranjit Singh was strong enough to stand on his own legs, to the disgust of his allies, he established friendly relations with Jodh Singh, the son of Jassa Singh who had died in 1803. He also gave Jagir to Jodh Singh's protege, Gurdit Singh the ex-chief of Amritsar. After the death of Jodh Singh in 1816, however his State also was annexed. Giving an account of this annexation, thus writes Griffin. "He had a contract of friendship

between himself and the Ramgarhia family drawn up, and in the temple of Amritsar, before the Sikh scripture, he stamped the paper, in his royal and illiterate way, with his open palm dyed with saffron.....But, in 1816, when the Sirdar (Jodh Singh) died, the opportunity of the Maharaja came. Having summoned the heirs to meet him at Nadaun to arrange for the succession, he surrounded the reception tent with troops, took them prisoners, and then marched a strong force ... and seized all the Ramgarhia estates."[16]

Ranjit Singh's activities had disgusted both of his allies, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and his mother-in-law the chief of the Kanheya misl. With Sada Kaur, his relations began particularly to be embittered. Different reasons have been forwarded for this. According to Princip, Ranjit Singh had asked Sada Kaur to make a provision out of her own territory for his two sons Sher Singh and Tara Singh—who had been born to her daughter, Mehtab Kaur, now dead.[17] Sada Kaur refused, but was compelled to execute a deed in favour of her grand sons. All her possessions, except some, such as Wadni in the cis—Sutlej regions, were thus annexed and she herself was kept a close prisoner till her death.

According to Amarnath, it was her practice of writing letters to Ranjit Singh's enemies and preaching hatred against him, that furiated Ranjit and he meted out this treatment to her. Both the views, however seem to contain some element of truth and writes Murray, "however humanity may plead in her behalf one does not see how she can be treated otherwise being what she is and has been."[18]

Thus did Ranjit Singh rise and consolidate his power. Elphinstone returning from his journey to Kabul wrote in 1809, "Almost the whole of the Punjab belongs to Ranjit Singh who in 1805 was but one of many chiefs but when we passed had acquired the sovereignty of all the Sikhs in the Punjab."

Different views have been expressed by different writers on this policy of annexation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His was "the kingdom founded in violence, treachery and bloodshed," says Griffin.[19] "The key note to Maharaja's character", continues he, "was selfishness."[20] Latif also says that Ranjit Singh's policy was the policy of snatching the rights of the weak. This view seems indeed to be corroborated when we think of his treacherous behaviour towards Sada Kaur and towards

the widow of Tara Singh Gheba. His behaviour towards some other small states which he annexed, too, seems to have been objectionable and condemnable. Yet, however there are some justifications in his favour, and we should judge him according to his own circumstances as they were.

"The full significance of this achievement (of Ranjit Singh of uniting the Punjab) can only be realised," says S. R. Kohli, when it is remembered that, for 700 years beginning from the eleventh century, that is to say, ever since the defeat of Raja Jai Pal by Mahmud of Ghazni, the tide of invasion had flowed constantly and steadily eastwards from Central Asia into India, and it was reserved for the sikhs under Ranjit Singh not only to dam the flood, but actually to roll it back across the Indus."[21]

Nor can we forget the great service that he rendered to the Sikh nation itself, when he united all the warring elements together and converted the race of free booters into an imperial race with having a national consolidity and solid political entity. Moreover, by digging out a kingdom from the debris of high political philosophy of Guru Govind Singh, and from the chaos that was created by the mutual jealousies and selfish motives of the different Sikh Chiefs, Ranjit Singh channelised the big annual revenue of this State of Punjab, which amounted to over three crore rupees, and which could now be used for a concentrated programme of providing career to thousands in civil, military and political departments.

Ranjit Singh's service to humanity was that he established peace in Punjab after a long period of anarchy and warfare. Trade, different industries and other arts of peace could develop only under a settled government and Ranjit Singh's action in consolidating the Punjab, was a step towards developing a national economy and thus the national prosperity.

More, before Ranjit Singh, the Sikh states existed only for Sikhs, the Muslim states for Muslims and Hindu states for Hindus. By abolishing Gurmata in 1805, and by employing in offices the people from all races, the Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans and Hindus, Ranjit Singh established an empire with a cosmopolitical character and in this he was being more true Sikh-like, than anyone among the other sikh chiefs of Punjab could be. "This political state,.....though sikh in

name on account of its circumstances, was really a secularised state which reconciled, protected and furthered diverse clashing interests of the different communities that lived under it."[22]

And again, although Ranjit Singh did use violence as dictated by circumstances, writes G. C. Narang, an "important trait in the Maharaja's character was the total absence of cruelty and vindictiveness." And yet more. Wherever, he used violence, he used of it as less as possible and never forgot to give liberal jagirs to the victims of his policy of annexation. Supporting this view, thus writes Griffin: "with all his capacity Ranjit Singh was not cruel of blood thirsty. After a victory or the capture of a fortress he treated the vanquished with leniency and kindness, however stout their resistance might have been, and there were at his court many chiefs despoiled of their estates but to whom he had given suitable employ, and who accepted their position, with the resignation born of Eastern fatalism, which takes the sharpest sting out of defeat.....and in addition, there was a large group of Muhammedan Khans and nobles who would have received short shrift from Gobind Singh, but whom Ranjit Singh wisely attached to his fortunes, thereby materially strengthening his position in the Western districts.

REFERENCES

1. P. R. C., Vol. IX, letter No. 7.
2. *Ibid.*, No. 7.
3. Latif, p. 349.
4. *Ibid.*, 351.
5. See Dr. G. L. Chopra, 'The pb. as a Sovereign State.'
6. See Ibrat Nama, ii, pp. 222-23.
7. Latif, p. 352.
8. Gordon, 'The Sikhs', p. 86.
9. M' Gregor, p. 155.
10. *Infra*, See Anglo-Sikh Relations
11. Kanheya Lal, 'Twarikh-i-Punjab,' p. 177.
12. Latif, pp. 366-67.
13. See Griffin, Vol. i, p. 165.

14. Cunningham, p. 133.
15. Griffin, p. 164.
16. Ranjit Singh, p. 97.
17. Regarding these two boys, writes Griffin. Sada Kaur "realized that if her daughter was to retain her influence she must present her husband with an heir, procured a boy during one of the Maharaja's expedition and passed him off as her daughter's. The child named Ishar Singh, only lived a year and a half and Sada Kaur determined to try the effect of twins. Wnen Ranjit Singh had started on his Cis-Sutlej expedition of 1807 it was given out that Mahatab Kaur was pregnant, and on his return twin sons were presented to him, one purchased from a Chintz-weaver, and the other offspring of a slave-girl in Mai Sada Kaur's house." Griffin, p. 107.
18. See also Payne, 'A short History of the Sikhs,' pp. 99-100; see also Griffin, pp. 165-66.
19 See Griffin, Ranjit Singh. pp. 88-110.
20. Quoting certain instances, writes Griffin. "Sirdar Fateh Singh of Kapurthala, for whom he publicly made a theatrical demonstration of affection, exchanging turbans in sign of perpetual brotherhood, and who had fought by his side in the compaigns of twenty years, he endeavoured to despoil of his possessions." And again, "when the young chief of Batalah married his sister to Sirdar Sher Singh, the families spent two lakhs of rupees on the festivities...But when the Maharaja heard of it, and of the boasts of the girl's mother that she had two parolas (a Punjabi word for a large basket of clay) of rupees, he at once" sent for them "and said that a family which could spend so much on a marriage must be able to afford him a contribution of Rs. 50,000." Griffin, Ranjit Singh, pp. 95-8.
21. S. R. Kohli, Cent. Vol. (Amritsar).
22. A. C. Khana, Cent. Vol., Amritsar, 1938, p. 199.

9

The Conquests and Consolidation of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar

THE NORTHWESTERN POLICY

(A) THE CONQUEST OF MULTAN

I

The province of Multan, which in the Ain-i-Akbari and in Ranjit Singh's records, is known as 'Darul Amaan' was a part of the Mughal empire. At that time it consisted of the Multan Division of Punjab, as it existed towards the close of the British rule, Bhawalpur state north of the dry bed of the river Hakara, the districts of Shikarpur and Jacobabad in Sind, and the districts of Sibi and Mari in Baluchistan.

When the Mughal power in India was disintegrating, the province of Multan was conquerred by the Pathans. In the southern parts of the province, between the rivers Sutlej and Hakra, a big Zamindar was recognised as Nawab, by Nadir Lhah in 1739, which latter on developed into the state of Bhawalpur. The cis-Indus portion of the Multan, not including the territories of the Bhawalpur state, was conquerred by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1752, who appointed a separate governor for it. It was this part of the province of the Mughals, with which Ranjit was latter concerned. This country was conquered by Hari Singh Bhangi in 1771. But the Bhangis were expelled from the country in 1779. By Timur, the successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali who now handed it over to a relative of his, Muzaffar Khan of Saddozai clan, and appointed him as its governor, with whom Ranjit had later to fight. At this time though in papers the state of Multan was under the suzereignty of the Afghan King, in practice more or less it was an independent state.

Importance of the city of Multan during the time of Ranjit Singh lay in the fact that besides being the capital of the state, it was also a centre of trade through which goods were exchanged with the countries lying beyond the Bolan Pass. Total revenue from all the sources, as it was later on calculated, was Rs. 6, 80, 975 per year. And this could be a big addition to Ranjit Singh's financial sources. Moreover, there being a direct route from Multan to the Bolan Pass, leading to the Kandhar province under the Persians at that time, Bolan Pass itself was defended by a force at Multan. The state of Multan, besides, pierced between the state of Bhawalpur and Southern Sind, by occupying which the Maharaja could prevent these Muslim states from coming together at any time, against the Sikhs.

The conquest of Multan was made finally in 1818, but before that Ranjit had to lead as many as five expeditions. Several reasons have been forwarded for so much delay in this conquest. Some Sikh historians attribute the delay to Ranjit Singh's generosity, that he wanted to give his defeated opponents opportunities to prove their loyalty. Some other writers say that Ranjit Singh was more anxious to possess the treasury of Multan than the state itself, and he was apprehensive that his attempt to occupy the state immediately may make its ruler escape with it. Every time, therefore when he led an expedition, he accepted a *nazrana* from the ruler and returned, till the treasury was completely exhausted. There is yet another view, according to which Ranjit Singh was not strong enough to occupy Multan at the first attempt and that is why he had to lead as many as six expeditions.

Be that as it may, Ranjit Singh led his first invasion in 1802 and according to Kannaiya Lal,[1] the city of Multan was attacked and plundered and after that the Sikh forces returned without occupying it. But the more accepted view is that which is given by Griffin, Dewan Amar Nath and Prof. Chopra. According to this view, the Multan ruler Muzaffar Khan submitted peacefully before the Sikh forces. Nay he met them thirty miles from the city itself and by paying a huge *nazrana*, secured his deliverance. He also promised a yearly tribute.

The second invasion, according to some writers, was led in 1805 for the reason that after sometime Muzaffar Khan stopped paying the tribute. But in the midst of his activities there, it is said, the Maharaja's

attention was recalled to Amritsar, where pursued by English forces Holkar had entered for refuge. Ranjit Singh had to leave the work half-done and return to cope with the situation thus created.

Ranjit Singh led his third invasion on March 15, 1807. Several reasons are forwarded for this. It is said that Muzaffar Khan was conspiring with Qutab Khan, the ruler of Kasur, who succeeding his father Nizam-ud-din, wanted to break with Lahore. Secondly it is said, Muzaffar Khan gave shelter to Ahmed Khan Sial of Jhang, who being defeated by the Maharaja, had fled his territory.

After reaching the vicinity of Multan, Fateh Singh was sent by the Maharaja to demand from the ruler an explanation for his conduct and the reason for his stopping the payment of the annual tribute. On receiving an unsatisfactory reply, Ranjit Singh invaded the city and occupied its many parts, but he utterly failed in capturing the fort and had to retire after getting an indemnity of Rs. 70 thousands.

The fourth invasion was led in 1810, when it is said, the Sikh forces commanded by Diwan Mohakm Chand, occupied the city and surrounded the fort. A bloody battle was fought with Muzaffar Khan's forces, but the walls of the fort were so strongly built that despite the use of the famous Bhangi cannon, no breach could be caused in them. Finally "Muhkam Chand was obliged through illness to relinquish the command, and at the end of a month, every general capable of taking the lead having been slain, Ranjit Singh made terms with the Nawab and raised the seige, the latter engaging to pay him two and a half lakh of rupees."[2] According to Latif, Muzaffar Khan also promised to supply some soldiers in the army of the Lahore ruler.

According to Griffin, when the two parties were thus busy in the bloody battle, both of them appealed respectively to the English for help. But the latter refused to do so for the reason that after the treaty of Amritsar with the Maharaja, Multan lay outside their province.

The fifth invasion of which greater details are given by Ganesh Das in his 'Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa Ji Ka,' was led towards the end of the year 1917. Before sending the forces, strict instructions were issued to the local officers on both sides of the road from Lahore to Multan, to make all arrangements for the supply of food, etc. All the

available boats on the Ravi and Chenab, were requisitioned for official use, and special postal arrangements were made, by establishing a postal chauky at the distance of every three miles on the road.

A force of 20,000 soldiers was collected, which included infantry soldiers, the cavallry and artillery. The Bhangi cannon was also brought forth. The nominal command of the force was given to Prince Kharak Singh who, according to Ganesh, was accompanied by his mother Datar Kaur for his encouragement. But in reality the control was in the hands of Mr. Diwan Chand. Muzaffar Khan, on the other hand, was also alert. He called all the Muslims of the adjoining territories for a jehad, and even appealed to the Afghan ruler for help.

The Sikh forces marched on January 14, 1818. Reaching Trimmu soon, a small force was sent to conquer the forts of Khangarh and Muzaffargarh. Here a reinforcement was received under the command of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Here an appeal was also received from the Multan ruler promising to pay a tribute if the Sikh forces returned. But the Sikh forces, as instructed by the Maharaja were determined to carry the expedition through.

The city of Multan was surrounded by the Sikh forces and bombardment started with guns on the walls around it. A considerable number of Sikh soldiers was killed. Yet, however they were soon able to cause breaches in the wall. The Pathans fled and enclosed themselves within the fort. After occupying the city, the Sikhs besieged the fort, but considering the bloodshed that the active fight between the two forces would entail, an appeal was made to the Nawab on behalf of the Maharaja, to leave the fort and be satisfied with a good jagir elsewhere. The Nawab was amenable to the appeal, but when the Sikh representatives went to settle the terms of the agreement on 16th May the Nawab had already, according to Sohan Lal, changed his mind under an inspiration from his officers who had aroused his spirit of self-respect.

After this, the Sikhs directed their cannons towards the fort once again and started bombardment. But although the wall near the Khizrigate and at some other places was freached, the Afghans carried on their stiff resistance, by filling up the breaches with earth and sand. Hundreds of Sikhs laid down their lives and for a time it was difficult

to decide whether one side was stronger or the other. Finally one afternoon, when after a hard fight both the sides had retired for some rest, taking advantage of the comparatively peaceful atmosphere, Sadhu Singh Akali, writes Griffin, dashed near a breach in the wall and butchering the Pathan guards in a moment's time, entered the fort. Hearing the call of *Sat Sri Akal* from this brave Akali, the Sikh soldiers rushed following him. The Nawab on hearing this, came out with a naked sword with all his nears and dears and a hand to hand fight ensued.

In the midst of this hand-to-hand fight, the Sikhs, according to Griffin, drew out their guns. The Nawab challenged them to fight with swords like brave men, but paying little heed, they shot him down, alongwith his five sons. The sixth was badly wounded, and the rest two submitted to the Sikhs. They were brought to Lahore, alongwith all the rest of the members of the family, and Ranjit Singh fixed an annual pension of Rs. 30,000 for their livelihood. And the Maharaja, as usual, concluded all these activities with huge offerings in the Gurdwara at Amritsar. Deep-mala was celeberated in Amritsar and Lahore and huge rewards and titles bestowed on the brave generals and soldiers who won this honour of the conquest.

This conquest, as mentioned above, besides adding to his financial sources, established Ranjit Singh's prestige among his enemies, and Afghans began to consider themselves as the next natural target.

(B) CONQUEST OF KASHMIR

For two hundred years before Ranjit Singh attempted to occupy Kashmir, this beautiful valley, the pride possession of any nation, had been ruled by Mahommedan rulers. For a long time it remained a part of Afghan empire, and when Zaman Shah, the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali acceded the Kabul throne, he appointed Ata Mohammad as its governor. Zaman Shah, however was himself defeated and blinded by an internal rising and had to run away to India. Shah Mahmud, the next ruler was in his turn, ousted by Shah Shuja, his half brother. But the former proved to be too strong for the latter, and with the help of Fateh Khan, whom he later appointed as the Wazir of Kabul, Shah Mahmud re-captured the throne from his half-brother.

But before retiring from the scene, Shah Shuja was determined to make one more attempt for the restoration of his power, and in this attempt he was helped by Ata Mohammad, the governor of Kashmir. Shah Shuja, however failed in his purpose, and having lost again and having spoiled his relations, with the Kashmir governor after some adventures he fell into the hands of his brother, Jehandad Khan, the governor of Attock, who sent him to Ata Mohammad to be kept as a close prisoner.

Fateh Khan, the Kabul Wazir, in the meanwhile, felt estranged against Ata Mohammad for his help to Shah Mohammad's enemy, and decided in 1812, to invade and capture Kashmir. Just this time, Ranjit Singh had also sent his forces to march on Kashmir. When both the sides learnt of each other's designs, they decided to seek each other's co-operation in the venture by declaring it to be their common cause. Fateh Khan wanted Ranjit Singh's help because he was afraid that the latter may not help Ata Mohammad against him, and some writers even say that his desire to meet Ranjit Singh was only an intrigue to stab him to death. But Ranjit Singh was not un-aware of such possibilities and if, as according to Dr. Sinha, "The young Barakzais had attempted to attack Ranjit Singh a repitition of the episode of Afzal Khan and Shiva Ji would not have been unlikely."[3]

Maharaja's purpose in seeking Fateh Khan's co-operation was also definite. With Kashmir and Kabul in opposition, and the hill states yet half subdued, he did not feel strong enough to get it alone. And as a matter of fact it seems that Ranjit's desire to invade the valley precipitated only when there was possibility of co-operation from Fateh Khan in this venture, and if prior to this, Ranjit Singh ordered his forces to march on the valley, it was not an attempt to occupy it with the first stroke. This march was supposed to be only an exploratory march, and Ranjit Singh's purpose was to get territorial knowledge for future expeditions and not the conquest of the territory itself. Another reason for this march, as some writers assert, seems to have been his eagerness to secure from the Kashmir governor the person of Shah Shuja, whose wife Wafa Begum had taken shelter with him, was being paid a huge maintenance allowance of Rs. 4000 per month, and had promised to handover the Koh-i-Nur to the Maharaja, if Ranjit Singh was able to bring her husband out of the clutches of At a Mohammad.

Different writers hold different opinions as to who made the first overtures. According to Murray.[4] it was Ranjit who initiated the matter, while Sohan Lal[5] and Dewan Amar Nath[6] assert that it was Fateh Khan who approached first. It seems, however that the both met the half way at Rohtas and decided the matter.

On terms of the agreement struck between the two, again, opinions differ. According to Wade and Murray, Ranjit Singh had no territorial ambitions on Kashmir. He promised to help Fateh Khan with 12,000 soldiers under the command of Muhkam Chand, and give facilities to Afghan forces to march through Rajori and Pir Panjal, in return only for nine lakh rupees from the Kashmir spoils and the Afghan help in conquest of Multan. Sohan Lal holds that the Afghans were to pay an amount of Rs. 1lakh to Ranjit annually, besides their help in the conquest of Multan. Ranjit Singh's own letter to Fateh Khan, written in April, 1813, however claims 1/3 of the Kashmir territory, .. of the Kashmir spoils and help in the conquest of Multan, in return for the help that his soldiers had rendered him in the Kashmir conquest.

Commenting upon the purpose for which the agreement was signed, thus writes Payne: "Niether party desired to come to blows, and neither was inclined to advance into the hills with the possibility of having its retreat cut off by the other. There was but one alternative. The leaders met and agreed to finish the hunt together, and divide the spoil. On this understanding the parties advanced, each having made a mental reservation to outwit the other if the opportunity offered."[7]

Be that as it may. With Muhkam Chand's help, Fateh Khan occupied Kashmir, but refused to comply with the terms of the treaty. Thus Ranjit was outdone in the game and his forces had to leave "the country in disgust", as the British records say. But we have discussed above that Ranjit Singh was perhaps not anxious to occupy Kashmir at this stage, and we seem to be further strengthened in our views when we learn that Ata Mohammad at one stage, offered to join Ranjit Singh against Fateh Khan, but Ranjit refused it. Had he been anxious to occupy Kashmir and force Fateh Khan out of the valley, no opportunity could be better than this.

Yet, however although Muhkam Chand got some local knowledge for future Kashmir expeditions, and although as Ferrier writes, he "got the person of Shuja who preffered to be with the Sikhs in spite of seductive offers made by Fateh Khan whose idea most probably was to make use of Shah Shuja in his plans for the reconstruction of the Afghan Empire and falling upon him when he had no further need of his services," we cannot deny that Fateh Khan's refusal to act upon the terms of the treaty was a diplomatic defeat of the Maharaja.

But the Maharaja was not a raw hand in politics. We have already made a mention that Attock was being governed by Ata Mohammad's own brother Jehandad Khan. After the fall of the former, the latter feeling alarmed, invited Ranjit Singh to occupy his fort, which he did at a cheap cost of Rs. one lakh.[8] Some writers assert that Ranjit Singh was intriguing with Jehandad Khan even before an expedition on Kashmir was led, and Murray goes so far as to say that it was this action of the Maharaja, due to "which Fateh Khan refused to share his Kashmir booty." Yet, however this was a master-stroke of the Maharaja's policy towards Afghans, and a crushing blow on Fateh Khan's rising ambitions.

Importance of Ranjit Singh's occupation of the Attock fort can never be over expressed. The fort had a great local importance, as lying on that general route through which all the Central-Asian invaders of India had come. It could act as a strong guard for the protection of this country. Not only that this high-road to India was closed to Afghans, but with this fort beyond the Indus in hand, Ranjit Singh could easily expand his territories right up to the Khybar Pass. It was not long, therefore before Fateh Khan's younger brother, Dost Mohmmad marched against Maharaja's forces, with 4,000 of the best Afghan soldiers, to retrieve his position.

Both the forces met at Chuch, but despite Dost Mohmmad's strategies, Sikhs won a decisive victory. Marching further, the Sikh soldiers plundered the Afghan camp at Hazro, and although, as according to Dewan Amar Nath, Dost Mohmmad really showed his bravery when he advanced right up to the Sikh Topkhana, yet final victory lay with the Sikhs, and Fateh Khan had to go back to Afghanistan disheartened.

Although Baron Van Hugel does not attach much importance to it, yet a closer study shows that importance of the Sikh victory here can never be over expressed. It being the first Sikh-Afghan war, Ranjit Singh's victory here gave him a lot of encouragement for future expansion. Besides securing the control of the strategically placed Attock fort, it opened the gates for Sikh exploits in the North-West. And yet greater importance of the victory was that, as Dr. N. K. Sinha writes, had Fateh Khan been victorious here, with rich Kashmir Valley in hand, and consolidated power in Afghanistan, Peshawar and Attock; and "flushed with victory over the Sikhs, he would certainly have attempted to win back the whole heritage of Ahmad Shah."[9]

The second Sikh expedition on Kashmir was led in 1814. Azim Khan, the younger brother of Fateh Khan, had been left as Kashmir governor after its conquest. After full preparations, Ranjit Singh sent an expedition under Ramdyal, the grand son of Muhkam Chand, and followed him personally to look after the supply and re-inforcement. The conquest of Kashmir, however was not as easy as it was supposed to be. A pitched battle was fought, but Ranjit Singh had to send a-re-inforcement before Ramdayal could stand the Afghan furies. To add to this the vagaries of the nature, heavy rains, precarious supply and insufficient number of troops at his command after he had sent a-re-inforcement to hard-pressed Ramdayal, forced the Maharaja to retreat. Ramdayal was surrounded by Afghans, but finally let off.[10]

Different views have been expressed over the incident. Diwan Amar Nath says, Ramdayal was victorious, killing 2,000 Afghans. It was only when Azim Khan acknowledged Ranjit Singh's supermacy and sent him presents that Ramdayal returned. But this view is not corroborated by the facts at our command. Another view is that Azim Khan had a regard for Ramdayal's grandfather Muhkam Chand and it was due to this reason that he let him go.

The more accepted view, as held by M' Gregor and confirmed by Dr. Sinha, is that Azim Khan not being strong enough to dislodge Ramdayal, and both sides being just in a balanced position, the respect for Ramdayal's grandfather might have been invoked to the advantage of the both.[11]

Yet, however it cannot be denied that Ranjit Singh's retreat was a big tragedy. Some of the best Sikh soldiers and generals such as

Fateh Singh Chhachhi, Desa Singh Maan and Gurbakhsh Singh were lost to the Maharaja and besides it was proved that Ranjit Singh's power was not yet strong enough for such big adventures, and against such great generals as Azim Khan.

Third Expedition

Third expedition was led in 1819, when Ranjit Singh was in more fortunate circumstances. Fateh Khan, the Kabul Wazir had died, and Azim Khan, the great general who could so successfully rule over the destiny of Kashmir for a couple of years, left Kashmir to succeed him. Jabbar Khan, the next Kashmir governor was weak. Sikh forces were sent under Misr Dewan Chand. Here again contradictory views are held. According to some accounts it was a well contested fight, while according to the others, it was a bloodless victory for the Sikhs. Anyway, this time the Sikhs were successful in occupying the valley and thus, Kashmir the pride of Asia, passed under Sikh control. Misr Dewan Chand, in appreciation of his feat, was given the title of Fateh-u-Nusrat, or a man in whose fortune victory is a permanent feature

In 1820 Ranjit Singh sent Khushal Singh, who after expelling Zaman Khan, the Afghan governor of Dera Ghazi Khan, handed over the territory to Sadi Khan, the Nawab of Bhawalpur, in return for a big sum of money as tribute. Sadi Khan already held the fork-land between Indus and Chenab, under the Sikh protection, though his cis-Sutlej territories had been under the British protection since 1815.

Next in 1821 Ranjit invaded Mankera. Its Nawab, Haji Ahmed Khan, held also the territories of Dera Ismail Khan, Tonk, Bannu, Liya and Kundian. Surrounding Mankera, Ranjit Singh defeated the Afghans. The Nawab was given a good *jagir* elsewhere and all his territory passed under the valiant Sikh ruler. [12]

(C) THE CONQUEST OF PESHAWAR

Before we discuss how Ranjit Singh occupied this territory, it is essential to have a short review of its back history. At that time, Shah Mahmud, the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali was in power in Kabul, with Fateh Khan Barkazai as his Wazir. On this side of Khybar, all the territories of Peshawar and Naushehra, etc. had been handed over

by Fateh Khan to his brothers, Sardar Yar Muhamad Khan, Sultan Muhamad Khan and Dost Muhamad Khan. The rising power of Fateh Khan, however was a sore in the eyes of Shah Mahmud, whose son, Kamran, got the Wazir murdered by an intrigue. It was this, as discussed above, which brought Fateh Khan's brother Azim Khan from Kashmir on the scene. Azim Khan got Shah Mahmud and Kamran imprisoned and brought Shah Mahmud's cousin, Shah Ayub, on the Kabul throne. It was to benefit from this confusion in Kabul, that Ranjit Singh invaded Peshawar in 1818. Afghan governors Yar Mohmmad and Dost Mohmmad fled the city and took refuge in the Yusufzai hills. Ranjit Singh occupied Peshawar, but very wisely he decided not to rule it directly unless he had collected complete strategic information regarding it and the surrounding areas. Collecting a nazrana of Rs. 25,000 he handed over the city to his old friend, Jehandad Khan, the ex-governor of Attock, and returned to Lahore. After his return to Lahore, however Yar Mohammad Khan re-conquered the city and expelled Jehandad Khan from it. Ranjit Singh sent another expedition almost immediately, but this time Yar Mohammad himself, paying a nazrana of Rs. 50,000, accepted to be Ranjit Singh's tributory. Next, as suggested by his French officers, Ranjit Singh captured some border towns to clear his way towards the actual annexation of Peshawar. Darband and Mankerah were occupied. Dera Ismail Khan was occupied by the Maharaja in 1821 and Dera Ghazi Khan in 1822.

The Battle of Naushehra

Azim Khan could not tolerate that his brother should rule Peshawar in that manner on behalf of Ranjit Singh. About the day of Dusehra in 1823, when Ranjit Singh realised his annual tribute from Yar Mohammad, Azim Khan was further infuriated and collected a huge force to challenge the Sikh power. He also incited the chiefs and Mulkhais inhabiting the territory between Attock and Peshawar for a Jehad.

On the other hand, when Ranjit Singh learnt of all these developments, he immediately sent a force under Prince Sher Singh, to meet the challenge. Soon after another force was sent which included the famous generals such as Hari Singh Nalwa, Attar Singh

Sandhanwalia, Dhana Singh Malwai and Dewan Kirpa Ram, the son of Dewan Muhkam Chand, alongwith some infantry soldiers recently trained under French officers Ventura and Allard. Accompanied by Misr Dewan Chand Singh followed shortly after.

The forces met at Naushehra,[13] and for a time it looked as if the Sikh forces were going to be defeated. Akali Phula Singh was killed regarding which Ganesh Das writes:

After praying to Guru Gobind Singh for help, Ranjit Singh spoke violently to the Sikhs. He shouted the call of *Sat Sri Akal*, hearing which the Sikhs were actually enthused as if Guru Gobind Singh himself had come to help them.

The Pathans felt as if a Sikh reinforcement had arrived and they fled before the Sikhs. Thus says Burns. "The Sikhs won a victory because of the words of *Sat Sri Akal*."[14]

In this battle about four thousand Pathans and two thousand Sikhs were killed. Many famous Sikh officers such as Baba Phula Singh, Gurkha General Balu Bhadur and S. Garbha Singh were killed. Azim Khan was so much disheartened, writes Latif, confirmed by M' Gregor, that he died on his way back of heart failure.

Ranjit Singh re-entered the city of Peshawar on 6th March 1824. He was accorded a huge welcome by its inhabitants, as according to Ganesh Das Again:

Yar Khan who had fled the city on seeing the advancing forces on both the sides, returned, and Ranjit thought it better to re-appoint him his governor for an annual tribute of Rs. 1,10,000, after which he returned to Lahore.[15]

Just "as the battle with Fateh Khan on the plains of Chuch decided the supremacy of the Sikhs in the east of Indus, this campaign established his power between that river and Peshawar."

Battle of Saider

Things, however had not yet settled in Peshawar. It was only within three years of Ranjit Singh's establishment of peace in Peshawar that, in 1827 an Afghan, Sayad Ahmad, declaring himself to be Paghambar challenged Yar Khan, occupied Peshawar and incited the Afghans for a *jehad* against Ranjit Singh. He was a fanatic, thus writes

M 'Gregor, "and like others of this stamp, was a dangerous and seditious character." Some writers doubt him to have been a British puppet, by whom he was helped and encouraged secretly. Hari Singh Nalwa was sent to suppress the uprising, and he defeated the Afghans at Saidu. But after sometime they collected again, this time in a formidable number, murdered Yar Mohammad and occupied Peshawar. For a time it looked as if Peshawar had actually slipped out of the Sikh hold. But soon Ranjit Singh sent his best general, Ventura, and Sher Singh, who reconquered the city. But this time again, it was not thought feasible to rule Peshawar directly, and Sultan Mohammad, a brother of Yar Mohammad was appointed its governor on the same conditions as before, because, thus writes Dr. R. R. Sethi, Ranjit Singh "distrusted his ability to maintain his hold over that distant country and its fierce population between whom and the Sikhs there excited proverbial antagonism."[16]

In 1833-34, Shah Shuja entered into an alliance with Ranjit Singh in which he promised to renounce all claims on Peshawar in return for Ranjit Singh's help for his reinstatement on the Afghan throne. But the ink on the treaty had not yet dried when Shah Shuja was said to have remarked confidentially that such "agreements are of no use," nor had he the intention to work on it in connection with Peshawar. When Ranjit Singh learnt of it, he decided to annex Peshawar forthwith. Moreover, for sometime, Hari Singh Nalwa too had been advocating a very forward policy, and Ranjit Singh also had strong doubts in the intentions of the Barakzai brothers of Peshawar. Dost Muhammad too being busy with Shah Shuja, this was the best opportunity to annex that province of Afghanistan.

Consequently, early in April, 1834, Ranjit Singh sent an expedition under the nominal command of prince Nau, Nihal Singh, but in reality under S. Hari Singh Nalwa and the French Generals, Ventura and Court, who took a position at Chamkani. The Barakazai chiefs of Peshawar had already got intelligence regarding the Maharaja's plan and having sent away their families, were ready to vacate themselves the excuse forwarded was the delay in the payment of the tribute by Sultan Mohammad, and strangely enough, for the presence of Nau Nihal Singh in the area for the first time as head of the expedition, it was demanded that the tribute be enhanced. This

demand for the enhancement of the tribute was immediately complied with, but the Sikhs having different plans up their sleeves, Hari Singh Nalwa sent a message that since Nau Nihal Singh wanted to visit the city, the Sultan should vacate it for sometime. The Sultan did it and fled to the village Sheikhan on the Bara river. Peshawar was occupied by the Sikhs on May 6, 1834. Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed its governor. An information regarding this was sent to the British authorities, who did not feel very happy and Wade was permitted to forward only personal congratulations to the Maharaja.

Dost Muhammad Attempts to Re-occupy it

When the news regarding the loss of Peshawar reached Dost Mohammad, he was busy in his battle against Shah Shuja. The loss stung him so badly that he flung his troops against his enemy and routed him in the battlefield. Shah Shuja fled the field with his mercenary soldiers. In the first flush of the victory, he wrote to Ranjit Singh to handover Peshawar to him for a tribute equal in amount to that paid by Sultan Mohammad or prepare for war. "If by way of favour, benevolence and generosity you will surrender to us again, then we will send to the court of the ruler of the World (Ranjit Singh) the tribute of Sultan Khan." The Maharaja's reply of course was a curt refusal and Dost Mohammad replied it with declaration of war on September 18, 1834, to which an equally defiant rejoinder was given by Ranjit Singh.

In order to create a fair chance for success, Dost Mohammad decided to give this war against the Maharaja a religious character. But this was possibly only if 'Khutba' was read in his name and if he could strike coins in his name. And this was possible only if he declared himself to be a king, for which he must have good means to keep up the title. Moreover, he feared opposition from his brothers, if he declared himself a king. Sultan Mohammad one of his brothers actually left him on the very mention of the fact. After several considerations, however, Dost Mohammad could find no escape from this plan, and on December 4, 1834, he was proclaimed 'Amir-ul-Momnin' (leader of the faithful), by Mir Vaiz, the chief Mulla of Kabul. The next day he assumed the title of 'Ghazi' and struck coins in his name. But his resources being limited he had to resort to

extortions of money and to levying arbitrary taxes. His ruthless efforts to collect money made no distinctions between infidels and Muslims and between the people of one race and those of the other. And within a short time, thus writes Mohan Lal, the country was made to look "an appalling picture of extortion and torture." But with all these extortions, he was able to collect only a paltry sum of 12 lakh rupees. He also sent appeal to several other chiefs to come to his assistance. But Mohammad Murad Beg of Kunduz refused it, and so did the chief of Kandhar. The Amirs of Sind agreed to give some aid but the conditions forwarded for it made impossible to avail it. Only Mir Alam Khan of Bajore and Fateh Khan Ysufzai of Panjshir agreed to supply some soldiers.

The British Government in India were also requested to help and for this Dost Mohammad tried to make a capital of the Russian menace in Central Asia. Wade actually seemed to have been enamoured of this opportunity and he addressed a letter to the Governor-General, telling him that here was the best opportunity to extend British influence in Afghanistan. He proposed that to allay Ranjit Singh's fears, he would be told that only friendly relations were being established with Dos and latter as he proposed, the British may try to mediate between Dost and the Maharaja and settle their dispute in favour of the former. The Governor-General, however rejected this proposal and asked Wade to continue his friendly negotiations with Dost without in any way commiting the British. The inexplicit language used by Wade in his letters to Dost thereafter, deceived him to hope even till the end.

Ranjit Singh sent a force of 25,000 soldiers in the middle of April 1835. The two forces stood arrayed against each other on their respective border, but neither dared take the initiative. Dost Mohammad was waiting for a definite reply from the British, while Ranjit Singh delayed the action to play a diplomatic game against Dost, "a sphere in which", according to Wade "he was always at his best." Ranjit Singh deputed an American adventurer Harlan (who was then in his service) and Fakir Aziz-ud-din, to negotiate a settlement with Dost, but actually to bribe his Sardars, Dost Mohammad was completely taken in. Harlan and the Fakir seduced Sultan Mohammad, who also saved them from Dost's attempt to arrest, In the meanwhile

Gulab Singh and Avitabile were depatched towards Kohat, and Ventura joined Ranjit Singh at Attock. Then some detachments were posted forward from the remaining side to bring Dost within the artillery range. "The clever diplomacy of Sikh chief succeeded in delaying attack until the Sikh troops were concentrated," writes Dr. G. L. Chopra. Dost was now left with no option but to fight or retreat and he preferred the latter course, leaving the field in the night of May 11, 1835, with his bag and baggage. Thus, the "political intrigues of the Sikh ruler causing treachery in the domestic circles of the Amir resulted in the breaking up overnight of a vast concourse of the Afghans, which was being viewed by the Sikh rank and file with so much dismay."[17]

Sultan Mohammad and his brothers Pir Mohammad and Syed Mohammad relinquished their claims upon Peshawar, but the districts of Hashtnagar, Kohat and Nakko were given to them in return for a tribute. And they also engaged themselves to watch for the Maharaja the future plans of the Dost Mohammad.

Dost Mohammad took sometime to recover from this shock, and in the meanwhile Ranjit Singh completed a fortress at Shabkadar by the middle of 1836, thus giving the Sikhs the command of one of the most practicable routes across the mountain ranges for transport of artillery from Peshawar to Jallalabad. Soon the construction of another fort was undertaken at Jamrood, at the very mouth of Khybar Pass.

Early in 1837, when the marriage of prince Nau Nihal Singh fell due, Hari Singh Nalwa sent his forces to be present at Lahore. Just this time, Mr. Fast, who was previously in the service of the British Government in India, passed by Jamrood, on his way to see Mohammad Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Mohammad. Seeing the unprotected condition of the fort at Jamrood, he suggested to take the opportunity and attack. The suggestion was taken, and Akbar Khan collecting some distinguished Afghan soldiers, picked a quarrel by preventing the Sikhs from taking water from a near-by stream, and soon the quarrel developed into the historic engagement of April 30, 1837. Heavy causalities were suffered by both the sides. But ultimately the retirement of the Afghans into the hills, showed that the day remained with the Sikhs.

The loss suffered in this battle by the Sikhs, however way heavy. Hari Singh Nalwa sent an S.O.S., to the Maharaja to send his forces back from Lahore, but his letter was not forwarded by ill-meaning Dogra chiefs to the Maharaja. The forces could not reach in time and Nalwa laid down his life in the battlefield.

It was a great victory for Maharaja Ranjit Singh indeed, and Peshawar remained a part of the Sikh empire ever after this and with their downfall it passed to the British and ultimately to Pakistan with the partition of India. But the Maharaja had to pay a very heavy price for it in the life of his most favourite General Hari Singh Nalwa. When the Maharaja heard the news of Nalwa's death, thus writes Kanheya Lal, he shed tears from the eyes of his soul and heart in his memory.

Thus, after all these conquests and annexations, when Ranjit Singh died in 1839, his kingdom occupying an area of 1,40,000 square miles, extended in the North, on one side up to Ladakh, and on the other up to the Sulaiman Mountains. On the South-East it extended up to Sutlej and on South-West up to, but not including, Shikarpur. Thus did Ranjit Singh convert, a race of free booters into an imperial race, and out of the ruins of the Mughal empire, and chaos that was created by the Afghan invasions, he proved to be the first non-Muslim monarch after Anangpal, who succeed "in inaugurating a power in Punjab, which, in point of military organisation and efficiency, proved decidely superior to that of the Mohammedans in the North,"[18] and which thus, would remain a pride of the History of the valiant Punjab for the times to come.

(D) THE NORTHWESTERN FRONTIER POLICY

After having discussed Ranjit Singh's conquest of the Afghan territories in the Punjab, it should be essential to have a review of his Northwestern Frontier policy, to complete the study of this question. Through the History of India, the problem of the protection of this frontier, and its proper administration, has always been a headache to the Indian rulers. And Ranjit Singh could be no exception. According to one view, Ranjit Singh had a powerful ambition to annex Afghanistan to his authority, thus "fulfilling the prophecy of the lawgiver in recovering the sandal portals, an exploit which would shed

lustre on Ranjit Singh's action,"[19] thus avenging upon the Afghans for their invasions and exploits in India. And the very fact that he joined in the Tripartite Treaty, proves this assertion. But this does not seem to be correct.

There is no doubt that for sometime, Hari Singh Nalwa had been advising Ranjit Singh for a forward policy and that his French officers too were anxious to try their hands in Afghanistan, as Ranjit Singh himself once told Wade. "The French officers tell me that if I place ten regular battalion, two or three regiments of cavalry, and a few pieces of artillery at their disposal they will engage to conquer Kabul and subdue the whole of Afghanistan to my authority." Ranjit Singh never seems to have entertained the idea very seriously, despite the prevailing chaolic conditions in that country, for a long time, from the death of Azim Khan to the accession of Dost Mohammad. And several considerations weighed with him in this connection. Firstly, the local climatic, territorial and geographical conditions, to which neither he nor his Sardars and soldiers had ever been used. Ranjit had already once experienced a disaster in Kashmir, in his attempt to conquer that valley and was not prepared to repeat the blunder. Secondly, he did not feel himself to be strong enough for the purpose, which should have definitely aroused the jealousy of the British in India. Thirdly, Russia too should not have viewed Ranjit Singh's increasing influence on this side with friendly eyes, nor was Ranjit Singh himself willing very much to bring his frontiers closer to those of Russia in any way. And frothly, there were powerful frontier tribes who could never have been tamed, and without which, his occupation of Afghanistan should only have spelled disasters for him.

He, therefore, like a wise statesman, contented himself with the conquests in these regions, such as those of Bannu, Kohat, Tonk, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Peshawar. But here again he preferred to rule through local Mohammedan chiefs in return for tributes than annex the territories directly to his authority. We have studied the conquest of Peshawar for instance. Till the year 1834, he continued appointing locally important Mohammedan chiefs at its governors. Only when he was fully satisfied with the possibility of annexing and keeping it within his control, that in that year he sent a strong expedition and annexed the territory.

His policy towards the border tribes too was tempered only with moderation and thoughtfulness. This policy could be termed as a 'tip and run' policy and it was the same policy which the British later followed in the North-East towards the Nagas and in the North-West towards these stribes. It meant keeping these tribes in awe by sending occasional and powerful expeditions, but never attempting to bring them under regular governmental control. He built several forts in this area, which besides helping in defence against Afghanistan, and in the collection of tributes, etc. were calculated to keep these tribes down. Such forts were for instances, built at Nara, Darma, Maru and Satana. Forts at Machine and Sikham, were built to fortify Peshawar. Forts also existed at Khairbad, Jahangira, Shabkudur and Attock, and they were also built at Manshera, Nawasahr and Haripur. Besides Ranjit Singh organised powerful moveable columns, which helped keeping the tribal people down.

Still, however Ranjit Singh does not seem to have been successful in maintaining perfect peace in this country. In several clashes with these tribes, some of the most important Sikh generals and officers, such as Amar Singh Kalan, Diwan Ram Dyal and Attar Singh had to lay down their lives. Syad Ahmad of Peshawar too was assisted by most of these tribes to create serious troubles on the Maharaja's frontiers. Such troubles, however rarely resulted in an ultimate loss of a territory to the Maharaja and the prophecy of Masson, which he made in May, 1835, that "Peshawar is the land of Egypt, the tribes of Peshawar the children of Israel and Ranjit Singh Pharaoh and the river Attock would become Red Nile if a Moses were found to overwhelm the Pharaoh in it,[20] remained unfulfilled, as it was bound to be.

(E) CONSOLIDATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF KASHMIR AND PESHAWAR

A few lines regarding the consolidation and administration in Kashmir and Peshawar may be added.

I. Kashmir

After the conquest of Kashmir, Moti Ram was appointed as governor of this beautiful valley. But this gentleman does not seem to

have been very much successful,[21] and was therefore soon recalled. Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed the next governor, who seems to have been a very considerable success.

Hari Singh Nalwa reached Srinagar on August 24, 1820. During the time of Moti Ram much of revenue had fallen into arrears and some chiefs were getting restive under the Sikh rule. The first thing that the Nalwa Sardar, therefore, did was that he issued a general announcement, promising welfare work for the general uplift of the masses, and warning that arrears of revenue should be paid early lest some serious action should be taken against the defaulters.

Baramula was getting rebellious. He marched his forces on that territory, and not only did he realise arrears of revenue, he also imposed a fine of Rs. 5 per family as an indemnity. After this he marched secretly during the night on some people known as Khakhas and Bubes,[22] on both the banks of the river Jhelum, who under their leaders, Raja Gulam Ali Khan Khakha and Zulfikar Ali Khan Buba, respectively, had repeatedly defied the government's orders to pay revenue and submit their accounts. Both the leaders were captured and sent to Lahore in chains. Heavy securities were taken from other leaders and thus they were brought under subjection.

Hari Singh Nalwa is said to have introduced many social, administrative and economic reforms in the country. The system of Forced Labour, which was said to have prevailed from the time of Shankar Verma, who was ruling the valley in the first decade of the 10th century A. D., was abolished.[23] Hindus had been forbidden to wear either shoes or turbans or any other head gear. This was corrected. A general order was issued that those who had been forcibly converted into Islam under Muslim rule, were free to come back to Hinduism or Sikhism. Thus about 40,000 persons are said to have come back from Islam. Of those who did so, a special mention may be made of the names of Pandit Ved Ram Matu and Pandit Sukh Ram Sarup.[24]

Of the several economic reforms introduced, the more important were, that under the Pathans, the wool production of the country had fallen considerably. The rate of grazing tax was reduced and liberal economic aid was given to graziers to improve this industry.

Different weights and measures had been prevailing in the country which were brought to uniformity. The following uniform weights were introduced.

17 Tolas equal to 1 Pao.
6 Pao equal to 1 Manota.
4 Manotas equal to 1 Tarak
16 Taraks equal to 1 Kharwar.

Yard divided into 16 girhas was legalised as a regular measure.

The number of floating gardens had been falling due to heavy rate of impositions. This rate being reduced, inducements were given towards developing more of floating gardens, thus adding to the beauty and resources of the valley.

The growth of saffron, for which Kashmir has the privilege of being the only country whole over the world[25] had been falling. The peasants of Pampur area, where saffron is grown, were called at a gathering, their difficulties and complaints were heard, after which by reducing rate of land revenue, and by other measures, they were encouraged to increase the area of land under this crop.

The paper making industry and other industries were encouraged. The different types of paper produced in Kashmir, in the Nawab's time were. Dahmsati, Hastmasti, Kalamdani and Sher Jangi, etc.

The rate of Land Revenue was also lowered. Thus whereas Kashmir paid a land reuenue of Rs. 15,52,825. under Akbar, according to Sir W, Lawrence, it paid Rs. 60,00,000 under the Pathan.[26] Under Dewan Moti Ram it paid Rs. 21,00,000. But Hari Singh reduced it to a mere sum of Rs. 13,00,000.

The country, according to Moorecraft, had been divided into 20 parganahs. It had 20 collecters, 10 thanas and 400 inhabited villages.

Ranjit Singh was said to have been so much pleased with the Nalwa in Kashmir that he gave him the unique honour of striking coins in his own name. Thus three different types of coins were in use in Kashmir. (1) The old rupee, minted in Kashmir and having the name of the Emperor of Delhi. It was valued at 10 annas in Hindustani rates. (2) Nanak Shahee, which was valued at 14½ annas in Delhi, but was

current throughout Ranjit Singh's dominion at 16 annas. (3) Hari Singh, which the words 'Sri Akal Jiu' with 'Samat 1878,' on one side and the words 'Hari Singh' and 'yak rupiya' on the other.

After Ranjit Singh had acquitted himself so well in Kashmir and after the valley had been thoroughly consolidated, he was recalled[27] for 'more important assignments,' and Dewan Moti Ram was re-appointed as governor of the valley. The Nalwa Sardar left Kashmir on November 6, 1821.

II. Peshawar

In his administration of Peshawar, Ranjit Singh permitted considerable local independence. Under the Sikh supremacy the chief Khans continued enjoying their powers to impose taxes, fines and punishments, even capitally.

Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed as its governor, after its conquest, and he was as great a success here, in respect of administration, as he had been in Kashmir. The first thing that he did here was the abolition of the payment of the hated jazia, which every Hindu had to pay personally, at the rate of one Dinar a year. Hindus had been paying jazia from the time of Aurangzeb. According to Maulvi Mir Ahmed[28] he imposed a fine of Rs. 4 per Muslim family a year, to make up the defficiency. But the facts show that it was realised only from those who did not pay land revenue.

The country was divided into five parganas, each of which was formed out to different important chiefs. Thus (1) Parganah Khalsa, Akarpura and Pubi, etc. was held by Sayin Ditta. (2) Hashat Nagar was held by Syed Muhammad Khan and Sultan Muhammad as Jagir. (3) Dauzai was held by Sunder Das Gopal Das Peshoria. (4) Muhammad Malik was held by Hazar Khani. and (5) Khalil by Arbad Muhammad Khan Khalil.

These chiefs paid 1/5, 1/4 or 1/8 of total produce, according to the fertility of the land, to the government. And this rate, according to Dr. Gulshan Lal Chopra,[29] was lenient as compared to that of the old rulers. Canals and wells were also dug for irrigation and thus the people were satisfied.

The total income from revenue in Nanakshahi from Peshawar was said to have been Rs. 13,39,057; and expenditure Rs. 10, 74, 081, thus giving a net surplus of Rs. 2,64,976.

Pleased with Nalwa's success, Ranjit Singh gave him the honour of striking coins in his own name here as well. Still, however, perfect peace, in a country where murders depredations and feuds were the part of ordinary life, could not have been possible. Thus in the words of the Attock District Gazetteer. "The authority of the Lahore Government was always admitted and often asserted but subject to that admission the people were left to wrangle among themselves and to settle their own disputes with sword and dagger."[30] The Lahore Government did as much as it possibly could, to establish value for human life and peace, but national characters formed through centuries, cannot be changed in short period of a couple of years.

II

In his relations with the East India Company's government which had safely established its sway up to the banks of river Sutlej near Ludhiana, almost the heart of Punjab and strategically the best place for it, the Maharaja was 'all hesitancy and indecision.' He indeed had clearly realised that one day war with the British was certain. But he showed a sense of indecision by postponing it to some future date and thus did not act in a bold fashion. The result of this kind of hesistancy and indecision was that when the Maharaja died in 1839, the British took full advantage of the weaknesses that had seeped into the body politic of the administrative set up of the Punjab during the next decade.

Ranjit Singh 'seems to have been convinced that it would have added more to his strength then expansion elsewhere: for his anxiety to reach the Jamuna made him oblivious of the advantages of leaving a buffer between himself and the company—though he may have believed that if the company protected the Cis-Sutlej chiefs now, it would soon annex them, and no buffer would be left.'

All his life Ranjit Singh never lost sight of the fact that in resources and manpower, the British East India Company's government had no equal, that though, his soldiers who were well-trained by the

French and Italian commanders, enjoyed some kind of superiority, yet in terms of discipline and general efficiency which marked the traits of a reputed defence force, his army could not come up to the standard attained by the English at that time.

Under such circumstances, when in 1820 the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur requested him for help, Ranjit Singh, turned a deaf ear to him. After four years, in 1824, when the Government of Nepal sought his co-operation by signing a defensive alliance, the Maharaja showed his reluctance to do so. Similarly, when the British attacked the fort of Bharatpur, the Raja finding himself helpless, approached Ranjit Singh for help. But the latter refused to extend any kind of military assistance against the British.

By nature and temperament the Lahore chief was too wery to fall into any kind of political snaro that might be little his growing reputation and fame as a ruler. It was in fact difficult to prevail upon him to agree to an alliance which might cripple him. He, therefore sought to play a safe game which should not land him into trouble in the near future.

The Maharaja made a questionable omission in not measuring his strength with the Company's government during his own life time. It is often said, 'All causes that were not the cause of Rome were destined to be lost. The central power, once dominant, could only grow and all the outside forces could only shelter themselves against Rome as enemies or augment the strength of Rome as vassals.'

Charles Metcalfe, on his part, acted well as a diplomat. During his negotiations, he replied to the difficult and ticklish queries of the Maharaja with tact, sobriety and wisdom. In this way, the British envoy 'endeavoured, in conformity to the instructions of the supreme government, to alarm the Raja for the safety of his territories, and at the same time, to give him confidence in our protection.'

'Lord Wellesley arrived in India 'in the darkest hour of the fierce Anglo-French struggle, when Nepoleon's star was in the ascendance over Europe, when he was invading Egypt and contemplating Asiatic conquests, and when, at home, a powerful Tory Ministry was governing by measures that would be described as arbitrary coercion. At such a period, the intrigues of the French in India had naturally reached their

high watermark and the opposition from the Indian powers reached an unprecedented level, which had forced upon him the necessity of disarming or dethroning them....He had fully realized that India had been drawn into the vortex of European politics as such Indian politics must imperatively be dictated by the needs of the situation in Europe. To Lord Wellesley's statesmanship must be attributed to the triumphant emergence of the British from a crucial struggle at the most critical stage in the whole period of Anglo-French rivalry.'[50]

When the new Governor-General, Lord Minto landed at Calcutta on 3 July 1807, a serious danger of an attack from north-west on British possessions in India was apprehended. 'It was an established fact that the practicability of an overland invasion of India by Frence depended entirely upon the assistance of the Governments of Persia and Turkey. It was also certain that the position of Persia to a French army would effectively obstruct its progress, while it was problem that the project would never be attempted till the support of that power had been secured. The inevitable effect of this was to fix the attention of the English administration in India upon the north-west corner of India. Both Persia and Trukey were, therefore to be warned against the evils of a connection with France and the injury to which they would be exposed from the consequent hostility of the British Government.'

The French war plans on India in 1807-8 were over-estimated by the British statesmen in India as well as the home government. The military and diplomatic measures adopted in future led to the reversal of British policy in the Cis-Sutlej region and also to the adoption of a more vigorous attitude towards the Sikhs.

In fact, Nepoleon's eastern-policy was never characterised by either consistency or clarity of vision. His ideas and planning in this connection were vague and not firm. It is quite evident from the fact that they took different shapes at different times and contained elements entirely contradictory in their essence.

At one time, Napoleon made a plan of having a friendly military alliance with the Turkish empire and Persia against no less a power than Russia. But the strange phenomenon of flexibility in his thinking made him alter this programme and he began to think of an alliance with Russia, Turkey and Persia against the East India Company's

government in India. He also planned to have an alliance with Russia and Persia against both Turkey and the British in India. But he could not experience a smooth sailing in such alliances. It was obvious that traditional enmity between, Turkey and Persia, between Russia and Turkey, and between Persia and Russia made it impossible to forge any stable system of alliance with either Turkey and Persia or with Russia and Turkey or with Persia and Russia. 'In trying to use these three powers on his chessboard to serve his own purpose for the moment, Napoleon could never understand that these powers also could be interested in their own objectives.'

Lord Minto, by his diplomatic intervention, managed to compel him to withdraw his army from all the conquests that Ranjit Singh had made in Cis-Sutlej region and also recognise that they were under the control of the British government.

Undoubtedly, the Maharaja had the superb qualities of a born ruler. 'Men obeyed him by instinct and because they had no power to disobey. The control which he exercised, even in the closing years of his life, over the whole Sikh people, nobles and priests, was the measures of his greatness.'

Ranjit Singh possessed many talents of head and heart and was very popular amongst his people. His subjects loved and respected him. 'Although half a century has passed since his death, his name is still a household word in the province: his portrait is still preserved in castle and cottage. It is a favourite subject with the ivory painters of Amritsar and Delhi.'

The Maharaja was an excellent horseman and an accomplished swordsman. Indeed, he was strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring. Besides, he had a remarkable capacity for work and remained busy from more till late in the evening. He followed the principle of Sher Shah. 'It behaves the great to be always active.' Endowed with an indefatigable capacity for work, he always led a very active and hectic life.

The Lahore chief was a remarkable ruler who led his men in many fierce battles and faced dangers without even caring for the safety of his life. These qualities of fearlessness rightly earned him the title of the 'Lion of the Punjab.'

Ranjit Singh has been described as the very 'embodiment of practical sagacity despite unlettered ignorance.' Like Akbar, he always sought the company of scholars and learned persons from whom he learnt numerous new technique of administration and about his own country and the world. He could speak Persian language in which the official records were kept.

'Ranjit Singh had given cause to people to realize that with his one eye he could see far more quickly and surely and surely than any of his contemporaries with a pair of them. From visual proof they had come to know that his hand had grown so swift at the draw that his flashing steel dealt deadly strokes before the enemy knew what was happening? His aim was unerring, he hit hard and, endowed with lion—like courage, no odds were too great to daunt him.'

Ranjit Singh was a shrewd administrator and a great statesman. His political sagacity is quite evident in his maintaining cordial and friendly relations with the British whose resources and military power were unchallenged in the nineteenth century. The Maharaja had realized that the British were 'safe friends and very dangerous foes' and he, therefore, did not expose his kingdom to the risks of war so long as he remained at the helm of affairs.

He achieved a remarkable success in securing the support of all sections of his people—Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims—who could 'defend the Northwestern Frontier against a powerful Afghanistan and unruly border tribes and administer it successfully....She (India) would also have lost the Northwestern Frontier region, the Punjab and Kashmir but for the rise of the Sikhs and the consolidation of Ranjit's sway in those regions. It is a certainty that if the disorganized *misls* had retained their holdover the Punjab, at least the Northwestern Frontier region and Kashmir would have become a part of Afghanistan under the Barakzais.'

His greed for dominion is too wellknown. It had always been his ardent desire to have a huge army, a large dominion, subservient people under him and huge resources to carry on the administration. In achieving all this, he undoubtedly achieved a marvellous success.

Ranjit Singh's 'career was naturally one long appropriation clause as is the career of empire—builders in all climes and in all ages....Poitical parochialism and local dynasticism were almost

insuperable barriers....Caution, discerning, conciliatory, depending more on diplomacy than on force, he was more unscrupulous than cruel. Most of those chiefs whom he dispossessed—and the list is very long—found to their relief that their conqueror was willing to give them sufficient *jagir* to maintain them in comfort and even high rank in state service if they were willing to serve him.'

The British relations with the Lahore chief remained satisfactory till 1823. Between 1809-23, the East India Company's government made itself very busy in its own affairs. On the other the Sikh chief was also engaged in his programme of territorial expansion. Whereas, the former was busy in curbing the power of the Nepalese, Marathas and the Rajputs, the latter devoted his full attention in conquering Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar, Derajat and some regions in the hilly terrain.

'Both the parties, it may be repeated, were busy elsewhere and naturally in spite of suspicion and watchfulness in some matters Cis-Sutlej continued to give freshness and beauty to the emblematic garden of their friendship and continued its fertilising way to the ocean separating yet uniting the realms of two brotherly powers.'

The position, however changed with the crushing defeat of the Maratha confederacy. As a result of it, the British became the paramount power in India, east of the Punjab and Sind. As Cunningham puts it 'Ranjit had become master of the Punjab almost unheeded by the English.'

The Maharaja sensibly felt the great danger from the British after the treaty of Amritsar when they had established their border-line on the other said of river Sutlej. This nightmare made him realise the fact that one day the British would be in a position to capture the whole of the Punjab *i.e. sab lal ho jaye ga.* And his prophecy proved true at a time when there was no strong ruler in the Punjab after his demise in 1839.

REFERENCES

1. Twarakh-i-Punjab.
2. Payne, p. 91.
3. 'Ranjit Singh,' p. 46.
4. *Ibid.*

5. Diary of Ranjit Singh.
6. Zafarnama, edited by S. R. Kohli.
7. 'A Short History to the Sikhs,' p. 92.
8. This amount had to be disbursed among Jehandaa Khan's soldiers who would vacate the fort only after the long standing areas in their salaries had been paid.
9. Sinha, Rani Singh, p. 52.
10. "This disaster was a sore subject with the Maharaja, and he never touched on it without denouncing Cashmere as a vile place." Foot Note, M' Gregor, Vol. I., p. 173.
11. See also Cunningham.
12. See Payne, pp. 99-107.
13. For further details see S. R. Kohli's Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa Ji Ka, pp. 149-229.
14. A different view, however is held by Kaye and Mohan Lal, according to which Ranjit Singh rather bribed his way through.
15. According to Dr. R. R. Sethi, the annual tribute was to be 15 horses and other products of Peshawar. See, 'Lahore Darbar.'
16. History of the Sikhs, vol. i, p. 196.
17. R. R. Sethi, 'Lahore Darbar.'
18. I. G. L. Chopra, 'Punjab as a Sovereign State"
19. Political Proceedings, August 15, 1836.
20. Political Proceedings, May, 1835.
21. See Maulvi Muhammad Din, 'Mukamal Tarikh-i-Kashmir,' Part III, p. 16. It is wrong to say that Moti Ram himself resigned.
22. Khakha is the first letter of the word Brahmin, if so written. These people had been converted into Islam from Khatris and Brahmins respectively, and hence they kept these words as parts of their names.
23. See Har Gopal, 'Tarikh-i-Kashmir, pp. 66-67.
24. See 'Twarikh-i-Kashmir, pp. 177-78. This gentleman, with whole of his family, had been mercilessly forced into Islam by Muhammad Azim Khan.
25. It is also perhaps grown in Iran, but it is of low quality.
26. 'The Valley of Kashmir.'
27. According to some writers Nalwa recalled, because Faqir Aziz-ud-din and some others objected that a military chief had been given governorship.
28. 'Twarikh Sarhadi,' p. 149.
29. Punjab as a Sovereign State, p. 130.
30. Attock D. G. 1907, Part A, p. 39.
31. G. S. Misra, *British Foreign Policy and Indian Affairs*, 1783-1815, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 63-64.

10

The Civil Administration of Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh, not an Autocrat

"Brought up, but not educated, in the idleness and debauchery of a *zenana*, by the previous influence of which it is marvellous that the stoutest mind should not be emasculated, and the acutest faculties not be irretrievably blunted, he," thus wrote Osborne of the Maharaja, "appears from the moment he assumed the reins of government to have evinced a vigour of understanding, on which his habitual excesses, prematurely fatal as they proved to his bodily powers, produced no sensible effect."[1]

Ranjit Singh was an independent sovereign ruler, thus writes Steinback, who appointed officers according to his own desire, struck coins, was the fountain-head of justice, realised revenues as he liked and declared war and established peace according to his own whims, According to some writers, Ranjit Singh was an autocrat, and all of the three modern estates—Executive, Judiciary and Legislature—were concentrated in him.

But this seems to be too violent an estimate of his character. That he by nature was ill disposed towards autocracy, is proved beyond doubt, when we study his habits and activities more closely and intimately. Tradition says that once when some Pujaris visited his court, overjoyed with their presence, he stepped down from his seat and wiped their feet with his beard History has yet to show another such instance, where a monarch so strong and so great, could yet be so small and so humble.

Again, every student of the History of the Punjab knows, how on violating a religious canon, Akali Phula Singh condemned him

openly in public, when the Maharaja visited the great Sikh temple of Amritsar. It was indeed a scene to be visited, when the Maharaja got up in the midst of his gorgeously attired sirdars and entourage, and offered his naked back to be whipped as a punishment. The hardest hearts melted at the sight, and tears gushed forth the eyes of those who witnessed the scene. Akali Phula Singh was so thoroughly converted that he later on proved to be one of the best soldiers of the Maharaja, who laid down his life for his cause.

Some more instances can be quoted in this respect Ranjit Singh appointed Hari Singh Nalwa as the governor of Kashmir, but when Fakir Aziz-ud-din and some other advisers of his objected against it on the score that Nalwa was better a General than a ruler, he was not adamant like Muhmad Tughlak and recalled his decision.[2]

Ranjit Singh ruled in the name of 'Sarkar-i-Khalsa,' never using his own name, nor appropriating to himself any high sounding titles, as it was the wont of the day. On his coins he inscribed 'Nanak Sahai' or 'Gobind Sahai,' not 'Ranjit Sahai,' and the state seal bore the inscription 'Sri Akal Sahai' or God our help,' Ranjit Singh, indeed, was very scruptious in attributing, thus writes Cunningham, "every success to the favour of God, and he styled himself and people collectively the 'Khalsa' or Commonwealth of Govind. Whether in walking barefooted to make his obeisance to a collateral representative of his prophets, or in rewarding a soldier distinguished by a long and ample beard, or in restraining the excesses of the fanatical Akalis, or in beating an army and acquiring a province, he always made it appear that every thing was done for the sake of the Guru, for the advantage of Khalsa, and in the name of Lord."[3]

Ranjit Nagara was the name of Guru Gobind Singh's drum and the one-eyed monarch, Ranjit, never considered himself to be better than a drum of Guru. "He", we may quote Payne in this connection, "assumed few of the outward signs of royalty. His dress was invariably of the simplest description, his only ornaments, even on State occasions being a string of pearls about his waist and the Koh-i-Nur on his wrist. He never wore a royal head-dress, and he never used a throne. "My sword" he remarked to Baron Hugel, "is all the distinction I require." And yet no stranger could have entered his durbar and mistaken any other person for the Lion of the Punjab. But though he affected

simplicity himself, his court was renowned even in India, the home of pageantry, for its splendour."[4] His simplicity in dress was indeed a distinction with the help of which wrote Osborne, any body could recognise the Maharaja in the midst of his gorgeously attired Sirdars.

Thus according to his personal disposition, it was not Ranjit Singh's habit to be an autocrat. But even if he liked to be one, it is difficult to imagine that he could be a success in his venture. The elements of the commonwealth of brotherhood, which had so thoroughly been diffused into the religious philosophy of the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh, and under which the authority of the Panj Piyaras, or the Five Beloved, was supposed to be greater than even that of the Guru himself, were too strong among Sikhs yet to permit of any autocrats or dictators. Nor, despite efforts throughout his life, was the Maharaja able to discipline free-booters among the Akalis. Akalis were the armed guardians of Amritsar and acted as censor of private morals. They had a contempt for Europeans and attacked even Metcalf's escort, when this British Officer was discussing friendly relations with the Maharaja. According to Burnes, the Maharaja had to appoint special detachments, lest the Akalis crossed the Sutlej, after the Treaty of Amritsar.

Again, although he had weakened all big Sardars, and his yearly review of their forces at Dusehra was like taking from them an oath of featly, yet their ambitions and their spirit of independence had not yet been crushed. Had Ranjit Singh been autocrat, on the intervention of his brother Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh should not have been forgiven for his repeated efforts to act up a new state for himself.

Nor would the Sikh soldiers ever be expected to tolerate an autocracy. They had conquerred the great states like those of Kashmir and Multan, not for the personal ambitions of the Maharaja, but for the national cause at their heart, which was to establish a unified empire of the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. One of the causes of Ranjit Singh's conquests and annexations, had always been his effort to satisfy their ambitions and to keep them busy, lest they fell upon the Maharaja himself. That these soldiers were not entirely mecenaries, is proved beyond doubt by the fact that they were never paid their salaries regularly, yet they chose to lay down their lives in the battlefields, and that too with great inspiration and conviction. It was

not unoften that the Maharaja "decided the dispatch of military expeditions by casting lots before the Adi Granth." And once this was done, fighting "at the Maharaja's bidding meant fighting for the Guru's cause."[5]

In a Suba, the highest authority was that of Nazim. This office was given only to those persons in whom the Maharaja had full trust. Next to Nazim, and at the head of every division of the Suba, was Kardar. The office of the Kardar, in fact, was more important than that of the Nazim. The latter was more of an appellate character than otherwise, whereas a Kardar was directly concerned with administration. The powers and duties of a Kardar were wide. He was a Revenue Collector, as well as a Supervisor of land settlement. He was a Treasurer as well as an Accountant. He was a Judge as well as a Magistrate. He was Excise Supervisor, as well as a Custom officer. He according to Dr. G. L. Chopra, had the duties of general supervision of the people. It was not very often that appeals were made over and above him to Nazim. Generally and in practice, he was considered to be a final authority over every subject within his area of administration.

The administration of Lahore and of Multan, was more efficient than that of Kashmir and Peshawar, and Ranjit is said to have reprimanded the governors of the latter two provinces, not unoften.

According to some writers, however the country was not divided into provinces. It was rather divided only into districts, some of which were governed directly by the centre. Says Dr. N. D. Sinha.[6] Three types of persons, carried on the administration of these districts. Firstly the Kardars, who were government agents, and were appointed by the centre with duties and authorities as discussed above. Second were the men of position and influence in their respective areas, like Diwan Sawan Mal of Multan. Their office was hereditory and besides paying the annual tribute or revenue, they seldom reported their affairs to the centre. And third were the Military chiefs who held feudal demesnes, in return for which they sent contingents in the battlefield. Their power within their territories was unlimited.

The smallest unit of administration was a Mauza, in which panchayats flourished unchecked. "So much sanctity was attached to these Panchayats," writes Dr. Narang, "that no party dared tell lies before them."[7] Villages were self-sufficient, land was held jointly on

Bhaiyachara principle, and although some say that Kardars squeezed every pie out of their pocket, yet they flourished.

The city of Lahore was ruled independently. It was divided into Mohallas, in each of which, its most influential man was responsible for the maintenance of peace and order. The Chief Police Officer of the city was called Kotwal, having wider powers for the maintenance of law and order. He was generally a Muslim, the most important being Mian Imam Bakhsh. Qazi was a special judicial authority in the city, who decided civil cases of Muslims.

THE FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The financial structure was simple. There was no budget system, and expenses increased or decreased with the increase or decrease in the resources.

Land Revenue

The Land Revenue was the main source of income, so much so that of the total income of a little over Rs. 3 crore, about 2 crore came from this source.

At different stages in his life, Ranjit Singh is said to have introduced different methods of assessment. These methods of assessment varied also according to the circumstances of the people in the different parts of the country. The principle behind all this seems to have been to make the system as much equitable as possible.

Batai

In the beginning of the period of his administration, for instance, Batai system was introduced in the country. Under this system, the land revenue was assessed on the threshing flour after the harvest was gathered. Claim was made on a portion of the produce in kind. This method which seems to have been borrowed from the Mughals, continued into existence till 1823. The system was dropped in that year due to some of its shortcomings. The main defects in the system were that the assessment being made only after the harvest was over, a large force was required to keep a watch on the cultivators, from the time they sowed their seeds, till the time of harvest, lest some

misappropriation of the crop was made by them. Moreover a strict watch had to be kept lest they concealed any portion of the yield.

Kankut System

Due to these reasons, the Batai system was replaced by another system, known as the Kankut System, in 1824. Under the new system, the assessment was made on the standing crop, taking its representative field and estimating the yield, out of which a portion was claimed in kind. This system proved to be definitely better than the Batai system, because under it the assessment being made earlier, there was no necessity to supervise the affairs of the cultivators up to the threshing flour. But this system, too had certain defects, as for instance that despite the best efforts, it could not help make the correct estimate of the yield before hand. Basing calculations only on a representative field, could never ensure that the assessment would be equitable. After 1835, the before, we learn that the land, sometimes began to be farmed out for 3 to 6 years, to the highest bidder.

Cash Payment

Towards the end of the reign of Ranjit Singh, Cash Payment system replaced the Kankut System. Under this system, cash payments were realised from the cultivators, inplace of the payments in kind. But this system was never enforced strictly. It was wavering and either party could revert to the old system at any time.

Mixed System

Sometimes and at some places, this system was worded upon. Under this some crops paid in kind, whereas some crops, such as sugarcane cotton and tobacco, on which no correct estimate could be made with regard to their yield, were made to pay only in cash.

Basis of Bigha

At certain places in Punjab, such as in the district Attock,[8] this system worked. Under this, estimates were made on a representative bigha, and applied on the rest of the land. After making the estimates, the price of assessment was fixed, which the village moneylender was asked to pay in cash, he in return being helped by the Kardar in collecting his dues from the cultivators in kind.

Plough Basis

At certain places in the country, the assessment was made on the basis of plough. Here instead of drawing estimates on the basis of a representative bigha, it was done rather on the basis of a unit of 15 acres of land, which could be easily cultivated by an average team of bullocks.

Well Basis

On the irrigated lands at certain other places, the assessement was made on the basis of a well. Under this system a lumpsum amount of charge was levied on a unit of land which could be irrigated by an average well, and this then was applied over whole of the irrigated area.

Thus, different types pravailed at different places, as according to the different District Settlement[9] Reports of Punjab, and this was so due to the different conditions of land in the different parts of the country. Generally in major portion of the country, however the Batai system was prevalent in the early years of Ranjit Singh's reign, where as the cash system existed during his closing years.

The Principles of Assessment

The government demand, writes Dr. G.S. Dhillon, was on the "basis of state ownership of land"[10] under which the cultivator could be projceted if he failed to pay his rent rate on the demand, the opinions differ. According to Dr. G. S. Dhillon, Dr. G. L. Chopra, Dr. N. K. Sinha and Griffin, however on the most fertile and favourably situated land, the state demand was as much as 50 per cent of the produce. On the less fertile and less favourably situated land, as according to Lord Lawrence, the demand could be 2/5th, or even 1/3rd or 1/4th of the total produce. Again, in the case of the land held by a Government official, such as Mukaddams, who assissted in revenue collections, the state demand was yet low. Sometimes, again, the whole taluqa was lapsed to a Kardar, on fixed payment is cash, and the Kardar made his own arrangements with his cultivators on some set principles.

On the whole, writes Dr. G. S. Dhillon, the cultivators paid "according to their capacity to pay and Adam Smith's famous canon of Taxtion, *i.e.,* "equality of Sacrifice, was effectively applied."[11]

Collection and Remittance

Collection of the land revenue was made by Mukaddams twice a year, about a month after the harvest. The Mukaddam was helped in his job by chaudhris and he, after collecting the revenue, remitted it to Kardar. The latter deposited it in the government District treasuries, where after defraying the local expensed, the balance was remitted to the higher authorities. Remittances to Lahore were, according to Shahamat Ali, made in hundis drawn upon the bankers of Amritsar.

Different views have been expressed on the Land Revenue System of the Maharaja, by different writers. Thus it is written in the Jullundur and Kapurthala District Gazetteer, Ranjit Singh "took, whatever he could and, whenever he could get it." Similar views are expressed by Griffin.[12] J.M. Douie writes that the rate of assessment was so enacting that "the villagers had to bribe the appraising officers to take less."[13] Again, writes the author of the Kangra District Gazetteer, that the local officers of Ranjit Singh were invested with too much authority, there was no fixed time for auditing their revenue accounts, and they enjoyed a free hand in exercising their caprice. Condition of the peasants, writes Griffin, was pitiable.

To form a correct estimate of the Land Revenue System of Ranjit Singh, however writes Prem Singh Hoti,[14] we must remember that the Land Revenue was the mainstay of the whole government machinery under Ranjit Singh. Yet, considered in connection with the circumstances and the age the Maharaja lived in, his system of Land Revenue cannot be condemned wholesale. Kashmir for instance, paid a land revenue of Rs. 15, 25, 825 under Akbar, Under the regime of Pathans, the amount paid was Rs. 60,00,000. But under Ranjit Singh, this beautiful valley paid only Rs, 13,00,000.

Nor are the European authorities entirely to be believed in their estimation of the system. Views of the Jullundur District Gazetteers have been expressed above, where it says that Ranjit Singh "took, whatever he could and, whenever he could get." But views of the writer of the Revised Settlement Report of the same district are different. He writes thus in unequivocal terms that, "Misr Rup Lal's (who was the authority incharge of the affairs) demand seems to have been usually moderate and equal."

J.M. Douie's view that the officers of the Maharaja were corrupt and that the villagers had to bribe them to take less also need, perhaps, to be sobered. We have already mentioned elsewhere that the great authorities like Hari Singh Nalwa and Dewan Sawan Mal were corrupt and they embezzeled money belonging to the State. There is no doubt in the correctness of this statement. But to form a correct view of the things, we have to concede that the Maharaja had certain limitations to work within. There was no well developed system of the means of communication and transportation to strengthen local control on the government officials. Nor is it to be forgotten that the Maharaja's state was yet an infant state, where for the first time after centuries of confusion and chaos, experiments, as discussed above in the different methods of assessment, were being made to seek out systems best suited to character and the needs of the people. And under such circumstances, if the Maharaja could not introduce a full-proof land revenue system immediately after the resumption of power, it hardly seems to be a personal weakness of his. Experiments were made, things had yet to mature, and everybody knows that towards the close of his life, his system was much better than it was in the beginning of his reign. Reforms do take time. Nor can it be asserted that the Maharaja did not castigate his officers, wherever he found them oblivious of their duties.

Other Sources of Revenue, Customs and Excise

Besides Land Revenue, another source of income was Customs and Excise which brought the Maharaja as much as Rs. 16,00,000 a year. For the purpose of the collection of this revenue, thus writes the Punjab Administration Report of 1849, the whole kingdom was dotted over with an innumerable custom barriers. The custom lines crossed one another irregulary. Duties were imposed on all articles, irrespective of their origin or destination. No clear distinction was made between articles of luxury and of necessity. Nor could any good escape duty. Even the agricultural produce, over which land revenue had already been paid, did not escape these charges. Nor did, according to some writers, an article have to pay these charges only once. While passing from one side of the country to another it would pay these charges as many times as it met the custom lines, so that before reaching its

destination, its original price got sometimes doubled and even more. Payne[15] also holds the similar views.

Yet, however the customs could not have been very oppressive and objectionable. Because, had they been so, thus writes Dr. N.K. Sinha, the merchants could have changed their routes and conveyed "their goods through the territory of a less enacting chief." Commerce was as even the bitterest of Ranjit Singh's cities agree in flourishing condition. And again, although Ranjit Singh could not understand the advantages of doing away with internal barriers against trade, considering the standard to which the principles of the contemporary Oriental economics had evolved, and considering more particularly the Maharaja's own circumstances, we cannot condemn him too much for the weakness. The Sikh people of the time as according to Dr. H.R. Gupta, are to be judged not by a modern standard but by a standard of their own time.

The *jagirs*, which were granted for meritorious services and for gallantry in army, were another source of income. They brought, according to Shahmat Ali, an annual revenue of Rs. 87,54,590. Princep, however estimated this revenue at Rs. 1,09,28,000.

Monopolies of all kinds were subjected to taxation, of which that of the manufacture of salt was important. Of the eight salt mines in the Punjab, only four worked and the annual revenue from their monopolies was about Rs. 8,00,000. The monopolies for the distillation of spirit and for the manufacture of drugs also brought some revenue.

Maharaja was an income from judicial institutions. And this, according to Princep, brought the Maharaja as much as Rs. 5,77,000 a year.

Abwabs were the several small cesses levied by the State and collected alongwith the Land Revenue. Income from the Abwabs varied between 5 and 15 per cent of the total amount of the land revenue.

Besides all this, there were other sources of income. All the principal artisans, such as blacksmiths, weavers and tanners paid a professional tax of Re. 1 per house. The inferior workmen such as kamins, had to pay an amount of Re. 0-8-0. per house per year. "Traders were also taxed from one rupee to two rupees per head."[16]

Yet another source of income was the lapsed *jagirs*. All the *jagirs*, granted for personal merit and services, remained with the grantee only for his life time. After his death his *jagir* reversed to the State and his descendants if aspirant of such a privilege had to earn it themselves again. This rule, with a very few exceptions seems to have been applied over all the servants of the State without any distinction or discrimination. So much so that even the descendants of the great personalities, such as Hari Singh Nalwa, who had rendered such great services to the State, could not escape it.

Again sometimes at the time of emergency, employees of the State were asked to forego their salaries for a certain period of time. Thus for instance, in 1825, when the royal resources were unusually exhausted, French general in the service of the Maharaja, and their regiments, had to give up their salaries and pays for two months.

Expenditure

Of the items of expenditure, naturally, in a State which was yet in its territorial infancy, the most important was that of military. The annual expenditure of the Maharaja on his military forces, as according to Shahmat Ali, was as much as Rs. 1,27,96,482 Rest of the income went for expenditure on the civil administration.

The taxation system of the Maharaja, as discussed above, may appear "crude to modern observer." Thus writes Dr. G.S. Dhillon.[17] "But allowing a due concession for the conditions under which it had to be worked out, there is scarcely any justification for such an impression." The biggest disservice that a government can render to its country is that it should collect taxes and spend the money thus collected in a country other than its own. In that case, there will soon be dearth of money in circulation, which will bring deflation and the ruin to the producer, which is always inherent in it. But in this, the character of Ranjit Singh's Government was above board. Under him, thus writes Dr. N.K. Sinha, money merely changed hands, what he collected with one hand, he gave away to the people with the other. No costly luxuries were imported from abroad and so much so that the foreign servants such as the French, too, were more or less nationalised. They were to marry Punjabi wives and settle in this country. What was, thus, paid to them, was spent within the Maharaja's country itself.

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

There was no written constitution or written law under Ranjit Singh, writes Steinback. Customs and Usages were generally the basis of justice, and religion was the main source of inspection behind this all. Sometimes whom of the judge had its play, but it was rare, as it was possible for every body to make an appeal to the higher authorities. Racial prejudices were given due consideration while deciding disputes. And the fact, that secular spirit prevailed over all parts of the Maharaja's administrative machinery, is further proved, when we learn that, despite the so badly blood-stained history of the Sikh-Muslim relations, the latter were given due regard for their religious beliefs and prejudices.

For Mohammedans, thus, it was the Quazis who ordained marriage ceremonies. They also decided Muslim religious cases, declared the recorded facts and expounded local law.

Justice in the time of Ranjit Singh; as it was in the time of the Sikh Misls, was more local than national. It was besides, essentially, a source of income to the State, so much so that, it is said, whenever the Maharaja got a chance to realise money through it, he never missed it, though, while administering justice, he never forgot to be honest.

King was the fountain-head of justice. Being the highest judicial authority in the State, he heard appeals above the courts of Nazims and Kardars, and sometimes, we learn, when he felt that justice was not being done in a particular case, he intervened of his own, even without a formal appeal having been made to him, and saw that the case was judicially decided. And it is also recorded that so many times he abused the governors from whose provinces he received many appeals.

Next to the King was the Adalat-i-Ala or Central Court, or the High Court. This court was instituted at the headquarters of the State at Lahore, and it heard appeals above the courts of Nazims and Kardars, before they went to the King himself. Special Adalti Courts were instituted in the cities such as Amritsar and Peshawar, which decided both civil and criminal cases coming from within the respective cities.

At the head of every province there was Nazim's Court. The authority of this court was mainly appelate and it heard appeals from the courts of the Kardars. The Kardar's court was at the head of every district and it heard cases both civil and criminal. In the villages of course, the village Panchayats exercised their judicial authority duly, and they, as discussed above, were given special recognition and respect by the State.

The Maharaja, as discussed above, was in the habit of granting liberal *jagirs* to those who deserved them. Within these *jagirs*, whether belonging to Sikh chiefs, Hindus or the Mahommedan Nawabs, the heads of the *jagirs* were given autocratic civil and criminal authorities in their respective courts, and ordinarily. Their subjects could not appeal even to the Maharaja.

Punishments

Penal code under Ranjit Singh was not very strong. Imprisonment was not often resorted to and capital punishment, writes Eliot, except at places like Peshawar and Hazara, was un-heard of. In the worst cases, some parts of the body of the criminal were ordered to be cut off. But rarely was there a punishment, writes Steinbach, which would not be changed into fine and money-payment.

The executions of cases dealt by the Maharaja himself, writes Osborne, "are very prompt and simple, and follow quickly on the sentence. One blow of an axe, and then some boiling oil to immerse the stump in, and stop all effusion of blood, is all the machinery he requires for his courts of justice. He is himself accuser, Judge, and jury; and five minutes is about the duration of the longest trial at Lahore."[18] In one case to which perhaps Osborne himself was a witness, thus, two men were said to have pilferred at the gates of Maharaja's harem. The matter was reported to the Maharaja, who called these men to his presence and ordered for a ear of the one and nose of the other to be cut forthwith.

Justice, as mentioned above, was an essential source of income. There was hardly a crime which could not be paid for with money fine. It is more interesting, however to note that both the winning and the loosing parties had to pay an amount of money to the judge. The

former paid it as Nazrana, because the case had been decided in favour, and the latter paid it as *jurmana* or fine. If a particular case such as that of these, was brought before a court, and it took an excessive amount of time for the judge to trace the culprit, the party which had been a victim to the crime, had to pay a special amount of money for the waste of judge's time, which was known as Taikhana. Whenever, the stolen goods were recovered, the owner paid 1/4th of their value to the judge as Shukrana. Sometimes, whole of the village near which a robbery occured, was made to pay for the goods robbed and 1/4th of their value was claimed by the State.

Charles Mason, a reputed traveller, happened to pass through Punjab on his way to Afghanistan, and remarking on the Law and Order situation in the country, he remarked, time was that a Sikh and a robber were synonymous terms, now few thefts are heard of and seldom or never those wholesale forays to which the chiefs were so much addicted." The assertion that the Sikhs ever acted as robbers, may be disputed,[19] but the fact that the Maharaja was able to establish a good standard of Law and Justice after centuries of confusion and chaos, and that too on the basis of complete secularism can hardly be over emphasised.

NEWS WRITERS AND DIPLOMAT

An essential requisite for all the great conquerrors and good administrators, as Ranjit Singh himself was, is that they should have an intimate knowledge of the Territorial, Social and Economic conditions, not only of the country they rule, but also of the countries which border their own territorial acquisitions. Besides, they should be well informed of the political atmosphere of the neighbouring lands, and they should know intimately the character, ambitions and whims of their rulers. And in this. Ranjit Singh, indeed, was a past master. The Maharaja, writes Elphinstone, was personally one of the most well-informed monarchs of Asia. His inquisitive nature and his thirst for knowledge, has rather been proverbial, and has been testified by almost all the contemporary European visitors to his court.

Like the most efficient of the Mughal monarchs in India of the more recent times, and like Ashoka of the ancient days, Ranjit Singh had his newswriters in every part of the country he ruled, and they

supplied him constantly, the information regarding all the important events of the concern of the Maharaja, from their respective parts of the country. At almost all the important places, such as the head-quarters of his provinces, two newswriters were appointed who reported to the Maharaja of the activities of the Nazims and those of the Kardars. They acted as an effective check on the corrupt practices of the high officials and spied against their disloyalty to the Maharaja.

Besides, the Maharaja had his agents appointed in Sind and Afghanistan. He was quite intimately informed of the British interests and activities, through his agents at places such as Ludhiana. Fakir Aziz-ud-din, was said to have been the most important of Ranjit Singh's diplomats. He worked as Ranjit Singh's foreign minister and helped him in all his diplomatic transactions. He was intimately informed of the British character and activities and many a time, it was on the basis of his advice that the Maharaja decided his affairs with the English.

THE GENERAL SURVEY

While drawing a general estimate of the administrative machinery of the Maharaja, some writers do not seem to have taken a very good view of the things. Different shortcomings in his system have been pointed out by different writers. His system was the one based upon his personal discretion, is the view some writers hold. Ranjit Singh was an autocrat, whose will was the law of the land. Yet, however his administration was not efficient. There was an abuse of delegated authority, corruption was fife, and many a time, Ranjit Singh's officials exploited the ignorant and illiterate masses of the land to a bad purpose. Ranjit Singh encouraged no fine arts in his land and no effort was ever made to cultivate the essentials of a good civilization on the national basis. Ranjit Singh established no schools for educational purposes, nor did his court have even a single scholar of repute. His treasury, many times, was filled with the help of the standing army. And finally, his personal influence, rather than any efficient governmental set up was the only hold upon the country, which held all people together, with the result that immediately after his death, there being no man of his magnetic personality to hold the things together, there was a complete confusion on the land, and chaos became the order of the day.

Their is no doubt that the administrative machinery of the Maharaja was not very perfect. But the perfection is a quality which only superhumans could possess, and the Maharaja never claimed himself to be anything more than an ordinary human being, and despite his failings and shortcomings, an ordinary and honest servant of the Khalsa. Moreover, whole drawing an estimate of his system, his circumstances and the age he lived in, must be given a due consideration. It will be ill, indeed, of us to judge him with the norms and the standards of the present times. And it is happy that almost all the critics of his system, with only some rare exceptions, after discussing his shortcomings, have not failed in giving sympathetic considerations to him at the end.

"As things stood," thus writes Temple, "there have been no convulsions, no confusions of rights and properties."[20] And again, writes Lawrence. "As a military despotism the government is a mild one and as a federal union hastily patched up into a monarchy. It is strong and efficient." "In a territory compactly situated," writes Burnes, "he has applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds and here we find despotism without its rigour, a despot without cruelty and a system of government far beyond the native institutions of the east, though far from the civilization of Europe."[21] Increased wealth of Lahore and Amritsar, thriving manufactures and trade in the country, as testified even by the first Administration Report of the Punjab under the British, prove beyond doubt the Maharaja's love for the people and their prosperity.

While discussing the merits of his administration, the first credit, that the Maharaja would deserve, as Dr. Narang would agree,[22] is the perfect impartiality with which he choose his officers. He had a very keen eye for merits in a man, and when he selected officers, it was neither religion nor race, and nor it was the birth of a man that counted with him. The humblest citizen under him had the possibility of acquiring the highest position. The persons such as Raja Dhian Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa, had no claim to high births, yet they were among the most favoured servants of the State, and that was because they possessed merits.

It is a misinterpretation of the essentials of Sikhism, when the writers like Sir Lepel Griffin say that "the main idea of Sikhism was

the destruction of Islam and it was unlawful to salute Mohammedans, to associate with them or to make peace with them on any terms." It was a policy which was followed neither by Guru Gobind Singh, nor by Banda Bahadur, the most determined amongst the Sikh fighters against Mohammedan tyranny. And much less was it followed under Ranjit Singh, when the Sikhs got all the political power in the Punjab and could do against Mohammedans, what they had done against the Sikhs in their own days of glory? In his administration and in the selection of his officers, a perfect policy of toleration and a discerning eye for merit were employed. Jats were better as fighters than as Ministers, and although the Maharaja himself was a Jat, he never appointed a man of his own race as Minister. Sikhs were warriors, and therefore they predominated in the Maharaja's military forces. Hindus were expert financiers, and therefore, the persons such as Diwan Bhiwani Das and Moti Ram, were given the duties of financial administration. Muslims were expert in diplomatic and confidential affairs, and therefore a man such as Faqir Aziz-ud-din, was appointed as foreign minister of the State. Imam Bux was head of the city police at Lahore, and Mufti Muhammad Shah was an adviser in mortgages, sales and contracts. Even the man incharge of an important place such as the fort at Govindgarh in Amritsar, was a Muslim—Imamuddin.

Ranjit Singh's policy to toleration is proverbial indeed, and we learn that it was a custom with him to favour Syads in assessment. He gave state-grants to Ulamas and holy-men, and sometimes, as we learn, he would reward richly a person who could recite the entire Quran from memory.

Another important quality of the Maharaja was the total absence in him of a belief in the Diving Right Theory of Kingship. The Maharaja never appropriated any high sounding titles to himself as it was a wont of the day among persons of his position and status. Throughout his period of reign, he remained a servant of the Khalsa, and so much so that, as discussed above, even the coin of his reign did not bear an inscription of his name. Everything was dedicated to the Almighty Lord above, and to Khalsa below.

Despite all this, however the Maharaja, as according to some writers, was a despot, who appointed officers, transferred them and dismissed them according to his free will. But this, despotism, again,

was only a benevolent despotism. He wielded strong power, because he carried the faith and confidence of the people alongwith him, and again because that he never made a wrong use of it anywhere. The instance as to how he offered himself to be flogged at Amritsar, when somehow unwillingly, he transgressed some essential of the Sikh faith, need not be too often quoted.

And again, it was a merit of Ranjit Singh's administrative system, that the economic resources of the State as explained, were utilised wholly within the State itself. It his system of taxation was exacting, his army and State officials distributed the money back among those to whom it belonged. Money only changed hands, and what the Maharaja took with one had, he gave it away with the other.

If the Maharaja failed in establishing some perfect legal system in the modern sense of the term, his merit was that he created an imperfect legal system, yet suitable as according to the age and circumstances he lived in, where only confusion and chaos ruled supreme.

The Maharaja kept no police to chastise the people, no Arms Acts were imposed, and the people held and manufactured arms freely and could use then against the State at any time they were dissatisfied with it. Yet there is a record that not a single responsible officer tried to be disloyal to him so long as he lived.

The people had a full freedom from any sort of official interference in their private life. It was only in connection with Land Revenue and other such taxes that the interference was made, but that too by a limited number of officials. His government, thus writes Payne,[23] though undoubtedly oppressive was not altogether unpopular. Whatever, its faults, it was a settled government, and that alone was an unwonted luxury in the Punjab.

Another quality of his administration was that it insisted upon no technicalities of procedure. Red-tapism, which is a curse of the modern democratic systems, hardly existed. Decisions taken were prompt and the authorities were delegated to make the administration localised. The flourishing condition of the Panchayats in the villages, was indeed a sign of high democratic freedom which the people enjoyed.

The Maharaja's liberal policy of granting *jagirs* to the deserving hands, is a fact too often quoted by his admirers and says Sunder Singh Majithia,[24] even up to the present time the *jagirs* granted to religious institutions irrespective of castes and creeds show the broad mindedness of the old chief."

And then, it is wrong to say that the Maharaja paid no need towards the development of the arts of peace within his state. It is wrong again to say that no encouragement was given to the development of education among the people. Hindu Dharamshaḷas and Pathshalas, and the Muslim mosques and Maktabs, were indeed given liberal endowments, as testified by his contemporaries. And as according to Lethbridge, the Director of Public Instruction in Punjab under the British Government, proportionately there were more literates in the Punjab under the Maharaja than under the British. And Dr. Leitner in his History of Indeginous Education in Punjab, bewails, that the Education of women which was so much popular in Punjab before its annexation by the English, had considerably declined due to a defective British approach to the subject.

And again, if there was some abuse of the delegated authority under Ranjit Singh, let us not forget that the means of communication in the country were yet primitive. That the Maharaja himself left no effort unmade to see the efficiency and honesty introduced in his system, can hardly need be emphasised. While moving out, thus writes Sunder Singh Majithia, he did so, often without his guards and *incognito,* and mixed freely with the peasants to know their difficulties and to plan their welfare. And that is why the people loved him so much, whether Hindu, Sikh or Muslims, and when he died they said, "The Punjab had become a widow."

And at the end, even if there were some defects in his administrative machinery, let us admire him, that in the midst of his career of conquests, and at a place where there was nothing but confusion, he was able to create a consolidated administrative machinery at all. His greatest service to the State, writes Gordon was "that he left his successors a United Kingdom, a territory larger than the present Italy."[25] And the creation of a consolidated central administration over such a big State, under such bad circumstances was itself an achievement to be envied.

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4. Payne "A Short History of the Punjab", p. 117.
5. See Balwant Singh 'The Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh,' p. 53.
6. Ranjit Singh, pp. 138-39.
7. Transformation, p. 303.
8. See *Attock District Gazetteer.*
9. Readers who are interested in a detailed study of the System are advised to consult these reports, which are available at the Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.
10. See Kh. College Amritsar Ranjit Singh Cent. Vol.
11. Dr. G.S. Dhillon, *op. cit.*
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13. See Douie, Punjab Settlement Manual.
14. See his 'Hari Singh Nalwa,' p. 99.
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21. Travels, i, p. 285.
22. See Dr. Narang, pp. 296-98; also see Gordon, p. 114.
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24. See Ranjit Singh's Cent. Vol., Cawnpur.
25. Gordon, p. 118.

11

Downfall of the Sikh Power

On July 29, 1839. Ranjit Singh died "as like the old lion as he had lived."[1] He had "found the Punjab a waning confederacy, a prey to the Marathas, and ready to submit to English supremacy. He consolidated the numerous petty states into a kingdom. He wrested from Kabul the fairest of its provinces, and he gave the potent English no cause for interference."[2] "He inherited mutiny," we could rather say in the words of Jagmohan Mahajan, "and created discipline, found chaos and produced order; and succeeded by the sustained effort of a lifetime in carving out a compact kingdom for himself. But his achievement, though highly remarkable, was personal and consequently ephemeral." His rule was founded on the fealings of a people, but it involved the joint action of the necessary principles of military order and territorial extension, and when a limit had been set to Sikh dominion and his own commanding genius was no more, the vital spirit of his race began to consume itself in domestic contentions.[3]

Empires rise but to fall. And the Sikh empire was not an exception. To throw responsibility, for its down fall on this factor or that, may perhaps be unjust, yet it is a matter of historical study, and we must, therefore investigate impartially into the causes which led to the Sikh decline.

(A) PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF RANJIT SINGH

It seems paradoxical and ironical, indeed, that the founder of an empire should be charged with the responsibility of its destruction. Yet it has been true of so many men and at so many places and nothing could be more just than to criticise Ranjit Singh as well, on this score.

A very hard drinker as he was, "it was his indulgence in frequent and fiery potations which killed him," before he should have died. But more. "Like most men who have been distinguished in history for administrative vigour and military genius, Ranjit Singh was very susceptible to faminine influence." He married eighteen wives "nine by the orthodox ceremonial and nine by the simpler rite of throwing the sheet: (chadra dalna). But of his mist resses and concubines, the chronicle is too scandalous for more than a passing mention in this place. "When he had secured the legitimate succession in the person of his son Kharak Singh, he cared little for the discreditable intrigues of his harem. Many children were fathered upon him by these ladies, either for political objects[4] or in the hope of obtaining his special favour....To his son, Kharak Singh, and to his grandson, Naunihal Singh, he sent several ladies of more than doubtful reputation from his own *zenana*; one of these being the beautiful Isar Kour, who was so cruelly forced to become Sati on the death of Maharaja Kharak Singh."[5]

The result of all these activities of the Maharaja was that, after the death of Naunihal Singh, none remained with undisputed claim to throne.[6] And we know that one of the causes of intrigues against Dalip Singh himself was that his legitimacy as being the son of Ranjit Singh was suspected.

And then, as he accepted every son fathered upon him, though only with a pinch of salt, he cared little to see that those who got this honour, should prove themselves worthy of it. No training was imparted to them in state-craft or in diplomacy, and even Kharak Singh, on whom there seemed to be no stigma of illegitimacy, remained only a nincompoop. The Dogra jealousy had always kept him away from the court, and Ranjit Singh though wise enough, was not cautious enough to discern their intriguing attitude. Aurangzeb's attitude of suspicion towards his sons, robbed them of the training in king-craft leading finally to consequences simply catastrophic to the Mughal empire. Ranjit Singh though not of suspicious character, his carelessness in the matter, repeated history in the case of the Sikh empire.

Ranjit Singh, though not of autocratic dispositions, yet wielded powers which come only in the train of military dictators. Not unoften

was it that his treasuries seemed to have been filled only with the help of his soldiers. Everything was centralised. The Maharaja was the supreme military commander, the supreme executive head and the supreme judge of his State. Rarely was ever an initiative given to an officer in administration or in military ventures. His court, may be with a few honourable exceptions, was a pack of sycophants, who though ambitious, were yet not all round administrative and diplomatic geniuses. And the natural result was, that when the Maharaja died. There was a vacancy everywhere. Soldiers lost their commander and the people their fountain-head of justice and the chief administrator.

And though, the Maharaja recruited men in his services only on merit, and though it goes to his credit that in an age of religious depravity, he cultivated in his court only the sane laws of religious toleration; yet the Sikhs and Hindus on the one side, and Muslims on the other, were people not only of diverse faiths but also of contradictory, traditions which in that age, placed them only poles asunder. Under the magnetic influence of the Maharaja, they could work together, but after him their harmonious co-operation was as difficult as ever it could be. And this was never fore-seen.

Views differ regarding the Maharaja's financial system. "The Maharaja squeezed the last drop of blood out of the peasant's veins,"some would say, and although what the Maharaja took with one hand, gave away with the other, and every peasant family having sent a son or two in the Maharaja's army, money flowed back into the villages in the shape of the soldier savings, yet the way they parted with their hard-earned money from the labour consuming lands, was hardly relishing. They tolerated all this because they had seen the worse days, but when they learnt of the better systems of the English, they found it difficult to put up with. The old. The changes introduced by the British, were more scientific and less exacting.

Nor was the custom system of the Maharaja the one worth much appreciation.[7] It afforded an encouragement neither to trade nor to industry. Those who studied the free flow of trade in the territories held by the British, disliked, naturally, a system under which scores of custom lines ran irregularly cutting one another at several places and thus making the goods brought from one end of the country to the other, pay customs not only once, twice, or even thrice, but many a

time, making the articles of common use thus dearer and more difficult to be consumed by the commonman. And then the Maharaja's government was a national government, in which there was no necessity of winning the support of the privileged and moneyed classes, to exploit and control the poor, as the British later did. Maharaja made every attempt to check the rich people from growing rich.[8] "These wealthy and incapable men," thus, writes Cunningham, "stood rebuked before the superior genius of Ranjit Singh, and before the mysterious spirit which animated the people arrayed in arms, and they thus fondly hoped that a change would give them all they could desire."

Nor was the Army Administration such which could have left much undesired. Besides the irregular part of his army, which was too free and indisciplined, the Akalis among whom remained too much undomesticated and had so many times threatened even the Maharaja" own life, the regular part of his army too, was not put under and trained for subordination to the civil officers, with the result that by the time Sher Singh acceded to power, it became simply a self-governing body. "Its affairs" thus writes Payne, "were conducted by Panchayats, or councils of "five," representing each company, and elected by the soldiers themselves." The principle of the commonwealth of the Khalsa, which had been introduced by Guru Gobind Singh, and under which the authority of the "five" was stronger than even that of the Guru himself, was too much misused. "To these Panchayats the men looked for the redress of all their grievances, and to them they made their demands for increased pay or the dismissal of obnoxious officers. The system originated in the reign of Sher Singh, and so rapidly did the power of the councils grow that they soon acquired the complete control, not only of the army, but of almost every branch of the administration." Civil supremacy in the hands of military personal, is never an authority well-placed. And it is no wonder that "In those days power was a dangerous possession. Every state official knew that to incur the displeasure of the army was equivalent to signing his own death warrant."[9] No sane-minded statesman would dare come forward.

Troops rose in rebellion at Peshawar, Multan, Kashmir and newly conquered state of Mandi, shortly after the Maharaja's death, and when Dhian Singh disbanded some whole regiments, "this only served to increase the general disorder, for the discharged soldiers,

scattering over the surrounding districts, threw in their lot with the many robber bands, who, in the absense of any settled government, roamed unchecked over the country side, blackmailing the terrified cultivators, driving off their cattle, and pillaging their farmsteads and villages."[10]

A wise conqueror as he was, Ranjit Singh failed to "breathe into the hearts of his people any noble sentiment that would have held them together after his death."[11] No common art was encouraged, no common culture developed. Nor was a common system of education founded. The people combined together only under the dominating authority of Ranjit Singh, and when that unifying centre was no more, the centrifugal forces got the best of their chance, and everything scattered away in no time.

Although Ranjit Singh tried to whittle down the possessions of Sardars like Hari Singh Nalwa, by confiscating their *jagirs* after their death, to the point even of incurring the blame of ingratitude to his servants yet, writes G.L. Chopra, "Ranjit failed to follow consistently the policy of reducing the people of the Punjab to a more or less uniform political level; the most glaring example of such a failure was the grant of an extensive and contiguous territory to a single Dogra family." And it was this Dogra family which was one of the potent causes leading to the distruction of the Sikh power. The Dogra brother Raja Gulab Singh, who later on carved out a seperate state for himself in Kashmir, was blamed of having rebelled many a times under Ranjit Singh, but he was always protected by his brother Dhian Singh, who never failed in prevailing upon the Maharaja to take a lenient view of the mis-doings of the in-experienced youth. Here was a generosity ill-placed. Gulab Singh was not as in-experienced man, he was rather making experiments, which led so unfailingly into the creation of a separate Dogra state. Not few of the sincere Sardars of the Maharaja's court, were disgusted with this over patronisation of the Dogras.

Nor had the intriguers among the Dogra Rajputs failed in bringing harm to the State even during the lifetime of the Maharaja. Had Dhian Singh forwarded the letter of Hari Singh Nalwa to the Maharaja, requesting his soldiers back, whom he had sent for Naunihal Singh's marriage, the life of this ill-fated and hard-pressed, yet so seasoned a general, Nalwa, might have been spared at Peshawar, and

he might have been of better service to the Sikh State in the hour of its peril. Had the Dogras not kept prince Kharak Singh away from the Maharaja's court, on one pretext or the other, the prince, the heirapperent might have got a better training in king-craft and saved his life and his empire. Ranjit Singh knew well that the Dogras would not permit his children to rule peacefully after his death. "It was the aim of the Jammu brothers to bring the whole of the Punjab under their dominion, Dhian looking forward to the control of the south, and Gulab that of the north."[12] Yet he did nothing to amend the situation.

His ministers were usually his favourites and adventurers. Selection of the Maharaja's officers was done on the basis of their outward merits, and never on the basis of their conviction. It was hardly astonishing, therefore that not a few of them were later on found to be in correspondence with the British, paving the way to latter's supremacy in Punjab.

Once when seeing the map of India, in which all but Punjab had been shown red, the colour of the British empire, Ranjit Singh said: "Sab Lal ho Jaiga." Meaning that the time wiil come when whole of this map would turn red. Or in other words, he knew that the British were bound to annex the Punjab after his death, and there was bound to be war between the two powers on the score. His mistake was that he postponed this war.

The decline of the Sikh power, according to some writers began when the Maharaja signed the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809. There was no reasonable excuse, according to these writers for his demoralised attitude towards the English after 1823. His diplomatic defeats on the question of Ferozepur, on the question of Shikarpur and on that of the Navigation of the Indus, were simply the signs of his cowardice. That the Sikh forces were strong enough to fight and defeat the British, only if their ruler had hired to enter the venture, is proved conclusively when, as Payne seems to agree, in the Kabul disaster of the British in the First Anglo-Afghan War, the "British force had suffered defeat at the hands of a for over whom the troops of the Khalsa had gained more than one decisive victory." Although the Maharaja was living, when the British faced their initial failure in Afghanistan and although he did see his own advantage in their failure, yet he remained unwilling or afraid to withdraw from his engagements.[13] He rather, against his

own interest; sent his whole army to Peshawar under his grand son, Naunihal, to act in concert with Captain Wade, leaving his Sutlej frontier then occupied by a British division, quite unprotected. He did not only this, but "the whole resources of his country in cattle, grain, etc., were thrown open to the British Government."[14]

That if he had dared, he might have won a war against the British may yet further be proved when we learn that the British Governor-General became nervous, indeed, when pursuing, once at least a bold policy in 1838, the Maharaja sent his army to the bank of the Sutlej to check the British soldiers, in case, on their march to Afghanistan they tried to force their way through the Punjab.

But this boldness of the Maharaja in 1838, was an unfortunate event. The Khalsa army was encouraged, and they developed a confidence in their power. But this they did at a moment, when shortly after, they lost their leader and a sane commander, the Maharaja himself. It was this event which later inspired them cross Sutlej, under the leadership but only of traitors. A suicide, as it proved to be.

Bismarck used to say, thus writes Dr. N.K. Sinha, a political alliance between two powers always means one rider and the other a horse. In the case of Anglo-Sikh relations under Ranjit Singh, "the British Government was the rider and Ranjit was the horse." "He never grandly dared. He was all hesitancy and indecision." He in fact, had killed the Sikh State before it seemed to have actually died. Clearly thus, the responsibility of the Maharaja in the downfall of his empire was not small.

But let us not condemn the Maharaja too much on this score, for howsoever imperfect, he was a human-being after all. And as a human-being he was unfortunate too, in the respect that almost all his loyal and brave generals, such as Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa and Ram Dayal had died before he himself left this mortal world. And none remained behind, except the weaklings and traitors to control the army. And again if the Maharaja failed to establish an efficient and lasting administration, let us not forget that the Maharaja was too busy in the conquest and consolidation of territories to afford much of time for other activities. And then, the Maharaja's time was only the medieval period of the Indian History, and the traditions that he inherited were only Oriental traditions. To

compare his administrative works with those of the modern times or with those of his contemporary European monarchs, would simply be an anachronism, and hence an injustice to that great hero of the land of the Five Rivers.

(B) THE DOGRAS

And there were other causes too leading to the decline of the Sikh power. "Sometime previous to his death." thus writes Sir John Gordon, "Ranjit Singh had taken into special favour the family of his minister Raja Dhian Singh, a Dogra Rajput, consisting of his son and two brothers, upon all of whom he conferred the title of Raja with princely Jagirs or fields for their maintenance. Poor, but of good family, they entered the Sikh services as troopers; handsome and well mannered, they soon attracted notice by their ability, and rapidly rose to high position, where there influence in public affairs became paramount, but not being Sikhs, they were looked on with great jealousy by the other Sardars. They played a deep game in the intriguing policy of that time, bent on gaining power and wealth, and on becoming independent, a policy which ultimately was successful.

"The Dogra Rajputs, a branch of the old Arya invaders of India, survived the Mohammedan invasions by occupying the hilly country north of the Punjab plains, where they maintained their independence till conquered by Ranjit Singh....they are strict Hindus, very clannish, loyal to their chiefs, and good soldiers, with all the Rajput pride of ancient lineage, disdaining every service but that of arms."[15]

Whereas in the European countries, by this time, to certain extent, better political principles and traditions might have been established, in the oriential traditions, that bane of monarchial government, the kingmakers, still existed. The decline of all great Muslim dynasties in the Medieval India, and the decline of the Mughal Empire itself had been marked by such self-made and self-seeker parties or juntos of king makers, and the Sikh power in this connection, could be no exception. These Dogra Rajputs, made best use of the opportunity that offered itself due to the weakness of Ranjit Singh's successors. They had already been intriguing for power and the Maharaja had already noticed it, but during the life time of the Maharaja, partly due to their respect for him, and partly due to his

strength, power and experience, they had never ventured to come out openly, although Gulab Singh did make some minor efforts towards this end. But it was a clear writing on the wall that these Dogra brothers, would make the life of Ranjit Singh's successors difficult.

The moment the Maharaja died, all the modesty and more civilized principles of politics were thrown to the wind, and the Dogras openly came to the forefront to quench their thirst for political power. Raja Hira Singh the son of Raja Dhian Singh, was their candidate for the throne. This small and handsome boy, it may be added for out knowledge, was in the life time of the Maharaja, especially loved by him, for a reason which even Osborne could not understand. The boy had so much an influence upon the Maharaja that he reserved even the privilege of interrupting the Maharaja, which none else not even his son—could do, while the monarch was busy talking with somebody in his court; and the boy set on a chair in the court with the Maharaja, while the persons such as Faqir Aziz-ud-din, who had spent life time in his service, squatted on the floor. No doubt the boy had thus collected considerable amount of influence upon some of the Maharaja's courtiers, on which later, he could bank for the realisation of his and his father's ambition.

After the death of the Maharaja, Raja Dhian Singh brought his son, Kharak Singh to the throne, but seeing him too much inclined towards his favourite Chet Singh, and Dhian Singh himself being an ambitious man, thus writes M' Gregor,[16] he murdered Chet Singh and some others in the presence of Kharak Singh. "After this act of violence, Kharak Singh shut himself up, and, though he occasionally attended the Durbar, he never forgave the insult. His intellect, never very powerful, became impaired, and the management of public affairs thus fell into the hands of Naunihal Singh....After a short reign of a little more than twelve months, Kharak Singh died of a broken heart." According to some other writers, however in conspiration with his son, Naunihal Singh, Dhian Singh killed Chet Singh and imprisoned Kharak Singh. Kharak Singh was later poisoned, which is confirmed by Smyth, who writes thus: "Kharak Singh was aware that he had been poisoned—at length Kharak Singh died and neither must nor can he made a secret that he died from the slow effects of small doses of Sapheda and Kaskaree."[17] Cunningham also writes, "although his

decline was credibly declared to have been hastened by drugs as well as by unfilial harshness, there were none who cared for a ruler so feeble and unworthy."[18]

Be that as it may, Kharak Singh died on 5th November 1840, and there was no doubt that this was a result of the Dogra conspiracy.

Capt. Wade was said to have been another hinderance in the way of the Dogras. Firstly because, as according to Cunningham, he had refused to make Dhian Singh the medium of communication with Ranjit Singh, when the latter was living. And secondly that he accused Naunihal Singh, the heir—apparent, of machination with the Afghan chiefs. Raja Dhian Singh got Capt. Wade transferred, and in his place now, Mr. Clerk was appointed on 1st April 1840, as the British agent in the Punjab.

For a greater portion of the period of Kharak Singh's reign in the Punjab, it was his son Naunihal Singh, who in reality administered the State affairs. During this period, writes Cunningham, he proved to be a competent and an efficient ruler, and there was every possibility that given an opportunity, he would succeed in arresting the violent decline in the Sikh power. But the kingmakers, the Dogra Rajputs, were perhaps determined not to see him a success. He was returning from the last ceremonies connected with the death of his father, when a structure of the fort fell upon him. Cunningham writes that, as a result of this the young Maharaja became senseless and died during the night. According to M' Gregor[19] he died at the spot, but it was given out that he had been seriously injured. His dead body was carried into the place, where the next morning he was declared to have died. There was no doubt, however that the Dogras were the culpable homicides If the structure of the fort fell upon Naunihal Singh, it had already been so planned to fall, and one view goes so far as to say that, the young Maharaja was only seriously injured, and after medical treatment, he was declared to be out of danger, but fearing a retribution from him, the Dogras got him murdered during night.

After this, Mai Chand Kaur, the mother of Naunihal Singh was brought to the throne. She was expecting a posthumous son to Naunihal Singh but as its sex could not be known, the Dogras openly came forth with their plans and suggested that Raja Hira Singh could be adopted by the Mai as her son. The Mai, however refused this. Later on she

was suggested a *Chaddar Dalna* of Naunihal Singh's wife with Hira Singh. But this proposal too having been refused, they now began to plan to do a short work of this lady as well. They conspired with Raja Sher Singh, whose claims to the throne were only doubtful,[20] and as according to Clerk, in the month of June 1842, they beat the lady to death.[21]

Sher Singh came to power, and for sometime he worked with the consent of the Dogras. But he had the painful story of a chain of the recent barbarous treacheries of his Prime Minister Dhian Singh before him, and he had no confidence that they would not be perpeterated against him. Securing, therefore the help of Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia, he got the Raja murdered.

But Ajit Singh who thus murdered Raja Dhian Singh, did not do so for the sake of Sher Singh. He had his own ambitions and shortly after, getting Sher Singh too murdered, he got himself at the help of affairs.[22] The Sandhanwalia Sardar, too, however was not destined to enjoy the power for a long time. Soon after, when the Dogra chief Hira Singh, learnt of all these developments at Lahore, he appealed to the army and winning over the support of some Sikh forces, invaded Lahore, caught hold of Sandhanwalia and put him immediately to death.

After this, Hira Singh brought Dalip Singh to the throne. Although he failed in becoming a king the himself, he was declared to be The Prime Minister of State. Dalip Singh too, however could not rule for a long time. The Dogras such as Gulab Singh, as it will be discussed later, were aspiring to carve out with the help of the British, seperate states of their own. And this was possible only if there were a clash between Sikhs and the British.

Thus writes Gordon: "The chief Sardars had gained affluence and lost moral force; the army was venal; and the arrogant punches, the military councils,....Clashed itself against the British ranks in fierce but unavailing efforts to overcome."[23]

(C) THE BRITISH CONSPIRACIES

And then, the British did not play an insignificant part in enhancing the speed with which the Sikh glory warned, and it were they who gave the coup de grace to it. The East India Company had swallowed

many camels, thus writes Dr. N.K. Sinha, and the Punjab was only a mosquito. And then, he continues, as in Rome, the central power once dominant, could only grow and all the outside forces could only shutter—themselves against it.[24]

The British never cared to abide strictly by the terms of their friendship with the Maharaja. Thus writes Dr. Ganda Singh: "To them friendship was only a matter of expediency. Like all political opportunities, they were friends as long as it suited them. While they were engaged in consolidating their power in Hindustan, they kept up the show of friendship and showed all courtesy and kindness to Ranjit Singh. But no sooner did they find themselves in about 1827 to be absolutely secure in their possessions as undisputed masters of the country, with their rights none to dispute and their might none to oppose, then they turned their attention to the north beyond the Sutlej, may, even beyond the Indus.[25]

The disputes between the English and Ranjit Singh on the territories of Wadni, Ferozepur and other small territories on the cis—Sutlej regions, have already been discussed; and they prove how as the time passed the British aggressive attitute towards Ranjit Singh was developing. The political game which the British played against the Maharaja in Sind, had disturbed the otherwise peaceful sleep of the lion of the Punjab, not once. And it was no mere incidence that Ranjit Singh had uttered those of ten quoted words "sab lal ho jai ga," regarding the map of the Punjab.

The case of Sayyad Ahmad of Bareilly, who raised a standard of Jehad against the Sikh rule on December 21, 1826; and who at one stage was even successful in capturing the city of Peshawar, but was later killed in the battle of Bala Kot on May 8, 1831, has already been discussed. According to Sir Charles Aitchison, he had "agencies in different parts of India for the levy of money and supply of arms....the imperial place at Delhi, the minor Mohammedan princes and the great cities of Lucknow and Hyderabad supplied him with funds."[26] Further we learn on the authority of Mirza Hairat Dehlvi, in his book Hayat-i-Taiyaba, that when the Sayyad informed the Lieutenant—Governor of the North Western Provinces (now U.P.), through Sheikh Ghulam Ali Rais of Allahabad, regarding his intentions to prepare for the Jehad within the British territories, the Lieutenant—Governor replied that

he had no objection to such preparations, nor did he have to say any thing in the matter, so long as the peace of the British territories was not disturbed. On the one hand, while it may not prove as some writers would like to deduce, that the British had an active connivance in the matter, yet we cannot help concluding that the British had no scruple against their own subject trying to violate the territory of a monarch with whom they professed to be on the "most cordial and friendly relations."

On March 4, 1838, on the occasion of the celebration of his grand son, Kanwar Naunihal Singh's marriage, the Maharaja had invited Sir Henry Fane, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces to attend. But that English gentleman, did not fail to abuse the hospitality of the host, as he was expected to do by the British authorities. Instead of appreciating the welcome accorded to him, he lost no time in trying to observe the military means and the soldierly qualities of the Maharaja's forces; and it was during this visit that, as according to Cunningham, a correct estimate was drawn by him, "of the force which would be required for the complete subjugation of the Punjab."[27]

This shows clearly, what was the mental attitude of the British towards the Punjab. They were in fact bidding only for time, and there was no doubt that the moment the great Maharaja closed his eyes, they would pull this ripe fruit down into their lap. They took every opportunity to conspire with the Punjab traders against the Sikh rule, and after the death of the Maharaja, whenever a British officer visited the Punjab, with one pretext or the other, he was never careless in instigating the Punjab masses against the Sikh Raj.

The Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849, but the records show that they had plans for this up their sleaves much earlier. As early as May 26, 1841, when the British were busy in Afghanistan, Mrs. Henry Lawrence had written to Mrs. Cameron from Subathoo that:

"Wars, and rumours of wars, are on every side and there seems no doubt that next cold weather will decide the long suspended question of occupying the Punjab. Henry, both in his Civil and Military capacity, will probably be called to take part in, whatever goes on."

And again on June 5, she wrote:

"Nothing is yet promulgated; but Henry supposes the army for the Punjab will be divided into three columns the main body accompanied by Mr. Clerk, our chief, and the others by H. and Mr. Cunningham, an officer of Engineers now acting at Ferozepur"

In October 1841, thus writes John Ludlow, "The British Agent on the Sutlej had proposed to march on Lahore with 12,000 men to restore order. The Calcutta papers teemed with plans for conquerring the Punjab.[29] The attempts to occupy Punjab under the pretext of restoring peace and order, should indeed have been made in that very year, but for the Afghan catastrophe, which blew up the British plans.

And then the shamless way, the British tried to seduce some of the Punjab officers, was no less a cause for divisions and disaffections in the Punjab. Major-General Sir Herbert Edwards gives an interesting account, as to how it occured to Henry Lawrence in 1842, that "a consideration should be offered to the Rajas Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, for their assistance, they alone in the Punjab being now able to give aid." "The Rajas, secured in their territory, even with additions, General Avitable guaranteed our aid in retiring with his property, and any other sirdars aiding us cordially be specially and separately treated for;" said Henry Lawrence. And finally towards the end of January, 1842, he openly proposed "that on the terms of efficient support we assist Raja Gulab Singh to get possession of the valley of Jallalabad and endeavour to make some arrangement to secure it and Peshawar to his family."[30]

How treacherously, the British influence led the Sardars Lal Singh and Tej Singh betray the cause of the Punjab later in 1845-46, is wellknown to every student of the Punjab History. Lal Singh, thus writes Cunningham, deserted Sikh army "when the artillery ammunition of the English had failed, when a portion of their force was retiring upon Ferozepur, and when no exertion could have prevented the invaders from retreating likewise, if the Sikhs had boldly pressed forward.

The British had for long been looking for a disturbance in the Punjab, and for a war with the Sikhs. That was their cherished desire, if they wanted a good pretext for the annexation of that country and

when Diwan of Multan revolted against the Lahore Darbar, which was then under the protection of the British, instead of suppressing this revolt, they gave every opportunity to it to spread. And when it did spread, they welcomed it, as Dalhousie wrote to the Home Government: "The rebellion of Raja Sher Singh followed by his army, the rebellion of Sardar Chattar Singh with the Darbar army under his command, the state of the troops and of the Sikh population everywhere, have brought matters to that crisis *I have for months been looking for;* and we are now not on the eve, but in the midst of war with the Sikh nation and the kingdom of the Punjab."

When a tributory of the Lahore Darbar, Dewan Mul Raj, Revolted against the lawful government and the rightful ruler of Lahore, which was under the British protection, with a queer logic, the revolt was considered to be a revolt of the Punjab Government itself against the British. And thus, it is not strange that when Lord Gough, the Commander in-chief of the British forces was ordered for a fight, for a considerable time he could not understand whether that fight was to be fought to suppress the revolt of Dewan Mul Raj, or to dethrone Maharaja Dalip Singh and annex the State of the Punjab. This conscientious officer did not make a secret of his feelings, when in the midst of the war, he wrote "war was to be against and not in support of the Darbar. I do not know whether we are at peace or war, or who it is we are fighting for."

The British intention for a long time had simply been to extend the limits of the Indian empire to its natural frontier in the North-West; and there is no doubt, in this they ultimately did succeed, when in 1849 they so crookedly annexed the Land of the Five Rivers. The part they played in the decline of the Sikh power was thus quite considerable.

REFERENCES

1. Payne, p. 134.
2. Cunningum, History of the Punjab.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The case of his two sons through Mehtab Kaur, which has been mantioned elsewhere, is one instance. See Latif, History of the Punjab, Vol. II., p. 370, where he even gives the names of the persons from whom the two sons were procured. Sher Singh was purchased from his father Nihala, a

chintz weaver, a native of Mukerian, and Tara Singh from a Mhammedan woman, daughter of Manki, a slave girl of Mehtab Kaur.

5. Griffin, pp. 106-07.
6. Gough, p. 50.
7. See the Chapter of Financial Administration.
8. See the Chapter on Civil Admn; Ranjit Singh's personal character.
9. Payne, 'Short History of the Sikhs,' pp. 151-52; Gordon, p. 124.
10. Payne, pp. 144-45; Gordon, p. 124.
11. Dr. Sinha, N.K. 'Ranjit Singh.'
12. Payne, p. 127.
13. 'Short History of the Sikhs,' pp. 133-34.
14. Calcutta Review August 1844, p. 475.
15. Gen. Sir John J.H. Gordon, 'The Sikhs,' pp. 120-21.
16. M' Greger, p. 5.
17. History of the Reigning Family of Lahore.
18. History of the Sikhs, p. 208. Gordon and Latif, however write that rumours were set afloat that Kharak Singh wanted to surrender Punjab to the British. He was, therefore deposed and his son brought to power. The former died after sometime of his deposition.
19. M' Gregor, p. 6.
20. As he was not considered to have been the real son of Ranjit Singh.
21. Clerk, to Govt. 15th June, 1842.
22. According to Cunningham, however Sandanwalia first murdered Sher Singh with Dhian Singh's help and later killed Dhian Singh himself. Both were killed on 15th Sept. 1843 Gordon also holds a similar view, pp. 125-26.
23. Gordon, (1904), p. 134.
24. See his 'Ranjit Singh,' pp. 189-92.
25. The British Occupation of the Punjab, (1955), p. 17.
26. See his 'Lord Lawrence,' pp. 9-10.
27. "History of the Sikhs," p. 227.
28. Edwardes and Merivale, 'Henry Lawrence,' i, pp. 216-17 Quoted from Dr. Ganda Singh, in his "The British Occupation of the Punjab," pp. 31-32.
29. 'British India,' ii, p. 141.
30. See H. Edwards, Biography of H. Lawrence, pp. 324-28.

12

The First Anglo-Sikh War

(A) ITS CAUSES

It was hardly seven years after the death of the lion of the Punjab, that a major clash between British and the Sikhs came. The Sikh soldiers crossed the river Sutlej on 12th December, and on 13th December, 1845, the Governor-General issued his historic proclamation asserting among other things that:

1. "The British Government has ever been on terms of friendship with that of the Punjab, and that the conditions of the Treaty of 1809 have always been faithfully observed" by them.
2. 'Friendly relations have been maintained with the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the British Government up to the present time,' and that British took 'precautionary measures for the protection of the British frontier,' their nature and cause being fully explained before-hand to the Lahore Darbar.
3. There have been many most unfriendly proceedings on the part of the Darbar,' but 'utmost forbeavance was shown by the Governor-General..Because the Governor-General always desired to see a strong Sikh Government established in the Punjab.
4. The Sikh army marched from Lahore by the orders of the Darbar to invade the British territory, and no reply was given to the British, for their demand of explanation.
5. 'The Sikh army has now, without a shadow of provocation, invaded the British territories.'

The proclamation declared war on the Sikhs and confiscated and annexed to the British territories all the long coveted possessions of the Maharaja on the left bank of the Sutlej.

This proclamation thus squarely lays down the responsibility for the first Anglo-Sikh war on the Lahore Darbar who ordered their forces to cross the river Sutlej, and thus invited a trouble with the British.

Different views, however have been expressed by different writers, as to who primarily should have been the cause of this war. The writers such as Latif, support the British position. He thus writes: "During the whole time (after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh) the tumult and confusion were reigning in the Punjab, the attitude assumed by the British Government was pacific and forbearing....As early as June 1845, the Governor-General, Sir Henry Hardinge, expressed his determination to maintain a Sikh Government in the Punjab as long as possible; this declaration of policy being repeated in September and again in the early part of October. Provocation was repeatedly given, but it was invariably answered, not by arms, but by friendly advice, or timely warning in the plainest terms, the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Hugh Gough) maintaining the opinion, even up to the 14th of December, that the Sikhs would not cross the Sutlej."[1]

But writes George Campbell; "The immediate collision was however I think hastened by imprudence on the part of British Frontier Agent, Major Broadfoot. I know of somethings done by him which it would be difficult to defend."

And again: "It is recorded in the annals of history, or what is called history, which will go down to posterity, that the Sikh army invaded British territory in pursuance of a determination to attack us. And most people will be very much surprised to hear that they did nothing of the kind. They made no attack on our outlying cantonments, nor set foot in our territory. What they did was to cross the river and to entrench themselves in their own territory?"

And writes G. Carmichael Smyth: "Regarding the Punjab war; I am neither of the opinion that the Seikhs made an unprovoked attack, nor that we have acted towards them with great forbearance....besides the Seikhs had translations of Sir Charles Napier's speech stating that

we were going to war with them; and as all European powers would have done under the circumstances, the Seikhs thought it as well to be first in the field. Moreover they were not encamped in our territory, but their own.

And again he writes: "The year before the war broke out, we kept the island between Ferozepur and the Punjab, though it belonged to the Seikhs, owing to the deep water being between us and the island." And if "the treaty of 1809 is said to have been binding between the two governments, then the simple question is, who first departed from the rules of friendship? I am decidedly of the opinion that we did."

India, there is no doubt, as Cunningham writes "from Kabul to the Valley of Assam and Island of Ceylone is regarded as one country and the dominion in it is associated in the minds of the people with the predominance of one monarch or of one race." and there was a general psychology among people, whether in Punjab or in the rest of India, that one day or the other, the Punjab had to be annexed by the British; yet to deny the fact that the British had an actively aggressive attitude towards the Sikhs, and that they had decided to annex the Punjab, long before actually it was annexed, is just to do the impossible.

I. THE BRITISH AGGRESSIVE POLICY

The British Aggressive Policy had indeed been felt by the Sikhs even during the time of Ranjit Singh. The Amritsar Treaty of 1809 was always considered as an instance of Ranjit Singh's weakness. The quarrel on Wadni, in 1823, the occupation of Ferozepur by the British in 1835 and the British show of force for the withdrawal of the Sikh forces from Shikarpur in 1836, were all instances to show that the British were bent upon creating trouble. And as early as 1838, when Osborne visited the great Maharaja, he had remarked in his diary that immediately after the death of Ranjit Singh, the first English step should be to send a huge force and occupy the Punjab.

The British Preparations

The war preparations which the British were making, and which they intensified after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, could not

pass un-noticed by the Sikhs. The British excuse for doing so, that when the Sikh army became predominant in the State, the 'machinery of Government would break down and the bands of plunderers would everywhere arise, creating trouble at the border, was accepted by none in Punjab. And the more the preparations they made, the more the Sikhs felt their aggressive pressure.

After the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809, the English Viceroy had proposed the withdrawal of the detachment of the British troops advanced to Ludhiana, to avoid irritating Ranjit Singh. Although the proposal was not finally carried, yet up to 1838 "the garrison of Ludhiana formed the only body of armed men near the Sikh frontier except the provincial regiment raised at Sabathu for the police of the hills after the Gurkha war." Yet in 1835, Ferozepur was occupied by the British, with the express idea that from that place, it was easier to March to Lahore than from Ludhiana. In 1838, some soldiers were actually posted at that place and the succeeding warfare in Afghanistan and in Sind later, confirmed this place as a permanent cantonment. From now towards, a steady increase took place in the number of the British forces on this frontier. And in 1842, using the argument of the remoteness from support of the two posts on Sutlej, a considerable body of troops was advanced to Ambala as a reserve.

Up to 1838, the British frontier troops were one regiment at Sabathu and two at Ludhiana, with six pieces of artillery, the total number of men being a little over 2,500. Auckland raised this total to about 8,000, by adding to Ludhiana and creating a new contonment at Ferozepur. Ellenbourgh created new stations at Ambala, Kasauli and Simla and raised the total thus to 14,000, with field guns numbering 48. Lord Harding raised the total yet further to 32,000 men and 68 field guns, besides 10,000 of men with artillery at Meerut.

More aggressive part in this connection was played by Sir Henry Hardinge. "He landed in India in July, 1844. On 23rd August of that year he addressed the Commander-in-Chief on the distribution of the force in Bengal. On the 8th September, five Native regiments were placed at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief for distribution between Meerut and the frontier. On the 11th of the same month, confidential orders were sent for the construction of two barracks at Ferozepur, to accommodate a regiment of European infantry and two

batteries of artillery. The two European regiments at Sabathu and Kasauli were also added to the garrison. In January, 1845, the Bombay Government was requested to send up H.M.'s 14th Light Dragoon to the frontier, and batteries in the Sirhind Division were raised from 90 to 130 horses. As a result of these measures, the British force at and above Ambala was augmented from 13,600 men and 68 guns in December, 1845; while total force at and above Meerut including Delhi and the Hill stations, which had been, only 24,000 men and 66 guns, now amounted to 45,500 men and 98 guns."[2]

During an interview with Raja Hira Singh, on 1st January 1844, an Akali exclaimed that a fort was being built by the English at Ferozepur. On 8th February, however the information reached the Darbar from Rai Kishan Chand, the Vakil at Ludhiana, that no fort was being built, though a magazine was under construction. The same day another information reached that about 20 guns and an immense quantities of ammunition were collected at the place. On 17th May, 1844, it was reported that the English were buying large quantities of grain to be stored at Ferozepur. And on June 1, reached a report that "the English commandant at Ferozepur had directed the Zamindars not to show any land for an autumn crop as a very large army was to be assembled after the rains."[3]

Though the Sikhs did not deny the British the right for defence, thus writes, Cunningham, "but that any danger was to be apprehended from Lahore was not admitted by men conscious of their weakness."[4]

The Afghan Affairs

And again, the Tripartite Treaty, as discussed in the chapter on the Anglo-Sikh relations, had been signed on June 26 1838, between the British Shah Shuja and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It was clearly indicated in this treaty that Peshawar would be confirmed on Ranjit. Singh. They policy of friendship towards the British, thus decided upon by Ranjit Singh, was carried on by Maharaja Kharak Singh, even to a greater extent, so much so that where as Maharaja Ranjit Singh had not for obvious reasons, permitted the passage of the main British army of invasion through his territories to Afghanistan, his son granted the permission at the time of their return. The courtiers of the Maharaja did not like this, and in October, 1839, they represented to him, "that

the passage of the British troops through the Punjab would be very expensive to the State, but the Maharaja said that the alliance between the two governments admitted of such expenses."[5]

But instead of being grateful to the Sikhs for this act, the British did not fail in intriguing against the Sikhs and the ink on the Tripartite Treaty had not yet dried, when they came to a secret understanding with Shah Shujah, through their agent Macnaughton, that he would be given Peshawar when Ranjit Singh's line was held to end with his grand son, Prince Naunihal Singh's death. Though the Sikhs were not made known of this scheme, yet, writes Cunningham, "it would be idle to suppose the Lahore Government ignorant of a scheme which was discussed in official correspondence."

The British attempts upon Afghanistan, however failed, when on 23rd December, 1841, after two years of the British occupation, their envoy in Kabul was murdered. A British Army of Revenge was then marched upon Afghanistan under the command of General Pollock and where as under the terms of the treaty, "the Sikhs were only bound to employ a contingent of 6,000 men," thus wrote Henry Lawrence to Mr. J.C. Marshman in April, 1842, "they did the work with not less than 15,000, leaving the stipulated number in position, and withdrawing the rest to Jamrood and Peshawar, where they remained ready to support those in the pass, if necessary."[6] And regarding the account the Sikh forces gave of themselves, thus wrote Lord Ellenborough, the Governor-General, in his notification of April 19:

"The Governor-General deems it to be due to the troops of the Maharaja Sher Singh to express his entire satisfaction with their conduct as reported to him and to inform the army that the loss sustained by the Sikhs in the assault of the Pass which was forced by them is understood to have been equal to that sustained by the troops of Her Majesty and of the Government of India. The Governor-General has instructed his agent at the court of Maharaja to offer his congratulations on this occasion, so honourable to the Sikh arms."

And again, writing to the Queen of England on 21st April, he said: "The Sikh army co-operated with that of India by a second pass leading to Ali Masjid, and there is no reason to doubt the good faith of the Sikh Government."[7] And later on General Pollock himself wrote

that "the Lahore contingent under the able direction of Captain Lawrence has invariably given the most cheerful assistance, dragging the guns, occupying the heights and covering the rearguard."[8]

Yet, when the Sikh army was giving so handsome an account of themselves, in the fulfilment of the friendly agreement, the British were assembling a third army of "reserve at Ferozepur on the frontier of the Punjab to keep the Sikhs in check." It is difficult indeed to understand, as to what did the British want the Sikhs to check from.

In fact Lord Ellenborough himself had written to the home authorities on September 30, 1843: "There does not seem to be any feeling against us (in the Punjab). They are only quarreling amongst themselves apparently; nor do I see the least show of hostility to us anywhere." By this time the murder of Sher Singh had already taken place, and even after his murder "no indication has been given," again wrote the Governor-General to the Duke of Wellington on November 20, 1843, "of the least desire to provoke the resentment of the British Government." He wrote to the Duke on July 2, 1844: "In the Punjab there is more of pacific appearance than at any time since the murder of Sher Singh."

British Intrigues to Seduce Punjab Officers

Maharaja Sher Singh was extending his helping hand in the Afghan affairs to the British. But instead of being grateful to him, the self-interested British began to seduce the Maharaja's chiefs against himself. Raja Gulab Singh thus was sent by the Maharaja to help the British army which was proceeding towards Afghanistan. And when Gulab Singh met Henry Lawrence in this connection in January 1842, it occured to him that "a consideration should be offered to the Rajas Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, for their assistance, they alone in the Punjab being now able to give aid"[9] and again, as Lawrence himself said: "we need such men as the Raja and General Avitabile, and should bind them to us by the only tie they recognise-self-interest." And as he proposed on January 29, 1842, "on the terms of efficient support we assist Raja Gulab Singh to get possession of the valley of Jallalabad and endeavour to make some arrangement to secure it and Peshawar to his family."[10]

This is how the British played a treacherous part against their honest ally Sher Singh. They thus were able to seduce not only Gulab Singh, but Sardar Tej Singh and Sardar Lal Singh, the Poorbia soldiers of fortune, of Rohtas, as well.

And again, General Ventura, who had been in the service of the Lahore Darbar, and who had gone on leave to Europe, on his return from leave, was made an easy tool by the British hands to realise their ambition in the Punjab. Thus did the Duke of Wellington address Lord Ellenborough on February 4, 1843. "An Italian Officer, who was here before in the service of Buonaparte and has since been in the service of Ranjit Singh, but had returned to Europe, has within the last three months taken leave of Louis Philppe previous to his return to Lahore. "His course should be observed."

It was not long before Lord Ellenborough understood the exact meaning of the words "His course should be observed." The General was contacted immediately after his return from Europe and the Governor-General was able to convert him into his secret agent.

In January 1841, the Sandhanwalia Sardars, Ajit Singh and his uncle Attar Singh, immediately after Sher Singh had come to the throne, fled to the British territory. On the intervention of Mr. George Russel Clerk, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana, the Sandhanwalia Sardars were permitted by the Maharaja in early May, 1843, to return to the Punjab and their property and jagirs were restored to them. Besides Kehar Singh Sandhanwalia, the son of Attar Singh and Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia too were released from jail by the Maharaja and set at liberty. It was these Sandhanwalia Sardars who murdered Maharaja Sher Singh, his son Prince Partap Singh and the Prime Minister Raja Dhian Singh.

Commenting upon this incidence, wrote 'British Friend of India' of London, in its issue of December 1843. "We have no proof that company instigated all the King-killing which has been perpetrated in the Punjab...we must say we small a rat."

The small of a rat is confirmed further. The catastrophe took place on September 15, 1843, and on September 12, 1843, Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington: "The affairs of the Punjab will probably receive their denouement from the death of Sher

Singh" and again on September 20, when the catstrophe had taken place, he wrote that the Maharaja of Lahore was "pulling his house down upon his head. The catastrophe was nearly taking place three weeks ago..."

It clearly shows that the British authorities were fully in the know of the Sandhanwalia conspiracy for the Maharaja's murder. In fact the sandhanwalias had been an easy prey to intrigues of the British, since their restoration to their jagirs and property by the Maharaja, who was supposed to be a friend of the British and who restored the Sandhanwalias at their request.

The British Provocation

The British in fact had been planning to attack the Punjab much before the war actually began. It was as early as on October 22, 1841, that Lord Ellenbrough wrote to the Duke of Wellington: "At present about 12,000 men are collected near Ferozepur to watch the Sikhs, and act if necessary.

"What I desired, therefore was your opinion, founded as far as it could be upon imperfect geographical information which could be given to you, as to best mode of attacking the Punjab."

And again at about the same time, writes John Ludlow, "The British agent on the Sutlej had proposed to march on Lahore with 12,000 men to restore order. The Calcutta papers teemed with plans for conquerring the Punjab." And even Henry Lawrence, who was then on sick leave at Sabathu, offered in a letter to the British agent, Mr. Clerk, dated October 29, 1841, his services in case of an operation in the Punjab.

In a letter to Lord Fitzgerald on April 6, 1842, when the Sikhs were rendering every possible aid to the hardpressed British in Afghanistan, thus wrote the Duke of Wellington: "I am glad to see such good account of the Sikh Government...But this I may say, if we are to maintain our position in Afghanistan, we ought to have Peshawar, the Khyber Pass, Jallalabad and the passes between that post and Kabul."

And again when the British forces themselves wanted Jallalabad, Ellenborough encouraged the Lahore Darbar to occupy it. The purpose

for this proposal was, as he himself wrote: "We shall have placed an irreconcilable enemy to the Afghans between them and us, and hold that enemy to the Afghans, occupied as he must be in defending himself against them, in entire subjection to us by our position upon Sutlej, within a few miles of Amritsar and Lahore."

These two cases clearly show the British attitude towards the friendly power, which had played such an important part in winning them a victory in Afghanistan. More so in the case of Peshawar. Peshawar belonged to the Sikhs, and if the British wanted to secure it from them, it could not be done without a war.

The Case of Kaithal

Another provocation was given to the Sikhs. Thirty-eight miles West of Karnal, Bhai Udai Singh, the ruler of the Sikh State of Kaithal, died on March 15, 1843, without leaving a male heir. According to Hindu law, an issueless chief or his widow was perfectly within his or her right, if he or she adopted a son. According to the Sikh custom, a widow too could succeed her husband, as Mai Chand Kaur of Lahore had done after the death of her son Naunihal Singh in her own name and right. Moreover, the State of Kaithal had not been held by its chief originally as a grant from the British Government. Yet, when Udai Singh died, his State was occupied by the British as a lapsed State. This could not have failed in alienating the minds of the Sikhs against the English.

Case of Kapuru

Kapuru, the manager of Saraj, a parganal of Kulu Hills, revolted against the Sikh Government. An expedition was sent against him and he fled across the Sutlej to Shangir, a tract of Kulu itself and later on surrendered Sihoti, a village lying within this territory to the British. The Lahore Government naturally objected against it, because the village was a part of Kulu, which was owned by the Darbar.

Another dispute occured. Dhanna Singh, a native of the village Mauran, situated in Nabha State, was in service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who being pleased with him, wrote to Jaswant Singh, the Raja of Nabha, to grant him the village Mauran as Jagir, in return the Maharaja himself conferring a number of villages for life, on Jaswant

Singh's sister. After the death of Dhanna Singh, his son, Hukam Singh, succeeded him in 1843. But Devindar Singh, the new ruler of Nabha, procuring an authority from Sir George Clerk, Agent to the Governor-General on Northwestern Frontier, on the strength of a fabricated letter supposed to have been written by Maharaja Kharak Singh, authorising him to resume the village, marched his troops upon the village in August 1843, seized Hukam Singh's property worth about two lakh and occupied the village. The letter which was supposed to have been written by Maharaja Kharak Singh, bore neither, his signature nor his seal. The Lahore Darbar demanded the restoration of the village, but the British Government replied that "a dependent State had no power to transfer to an independent one without the consent of the paramount power." So Jaswant Singh's grant to Dhanna Singh had been illegal had the claim of the Lahore Darbar invalid.

The Treasure of Raja Suchet Singh

This was another cause of bitterness between the two governments. "The Rajas of Jummu have always sought to acquire wealth by trade as well as by war and policy and they have had a house in Ferozepur for some years past, for the transaction of their business in salt chiefly of several mines concerning which Raja Gulab Singh holds the contract from the Lahore Government."[11] During the first Afghan war, as Kanehya Lal writes, when the British Government wanted to float some loan, Raja Suchet Singh sent a good quantity of gold and cash to his house at Ferozepur for a dual purpose, to secure it outside the country and with it to win English sympathy. But the money having reached there late, when the British required it no more, the Raja got about fifteen lakhs of rupees buried in his house at Ferozepur. He divulged this secret to Hira Singh at the time of his death. Hira Singh in a letter to Richmond, claimed:

"First—that the Government of the Punjab is de-facto Government ruling over a numerous people judging between man and man."

"Second—that it is the only true interpreter of its own laws, and that it can best decide to whom the treasure deposited by its subjects in Ferozepur belongs."

Third—that the treasure in question is not claimed by any subject or dependent of the British Government and that consequently it must

belong wholly to subjects or dependents of the Lahore Government, which can best determine the right of the claimants."

"Fourth... that the two governments have no concern, whatever which the subjects of one another and that the rights of the subjects of each are to be obtained only through the respective governments."[12]

Receiving no satisfactory reply, Maharaja Dalip Singh wrote personally on the subject to the Governor-General in July 1844. Currie directed Richmond on August 10, 1844, to address, the Lahore Darbar as "...the Governor—General is willing to meet the wishes of the Maharaja, if His Highness will state that the heirs of the late Raja Suchet Singh are not willing to prefer their claim to this property,...but are willing that it shall be relinquished to the Lahore Government with a view to just disposal according to the law and usage of their country; and the Governor-General....on receiving this distinct assuarance, will cause the treasure to be delivered to the persons authorised by His Highness to receive it."[13]

Gulab Singh, and the widow of Suchet Singh who had adopted as her son, Ranbir Singh nicknamed Mian Phina, a son of Gulab Singh, were asked by Richmond to express their opinion. While Gulab Singh did not express his view clearly, the widow of Suchet Singh refused in her reply, that the treasure could be given up without her consent or that of her son. Richmond informed the Darbar of it in October forwarding "the legal obligations by which the British Government is bound only to transfer the property with the consent of the parties to whom it belongs."[14]

This, however could not satisfy the Darbar, who considered Raja Suchet Singh as a rebel and whose property, therefore could be confiscated. Ironically enough, after the First Sikh War, this money was adjusted by the British Government as a part payment of the price of Kashmir, which was sold to him.[15]

They Prepared Boats

In 1884 and 1845; though not communicated to, the Sikhs knew well that the British were preparing some boats at Bombay to make bridges across Sutlej to "convey troops up and down, and save as an enormous charge on the Sutlej," as Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington on May 9, 1844. When the Sikhs expressed a

doubt and apprehension regarding this act of the British, the pretext forwarded was that the purpose of constructing their boats was to facilitate trade in the Indus and the Sutlej. But these arguments could hardly convince the Sikhs, who by this time had known the British character thoroughly well.

The establishment at Basian near Raikot, of a grand supply depot, showed how the British were preparing. And again, the collection of ordnance and ammunition at Sakkar in Sind, to equip a force of 5,000, to march towards Multan, was a subject of ordinary official correspondence. And although, Charles Napier, the Sind Governor, expressed complete ignorance about this correspondence among his subordinates, when enquired about by Cunningham; it is difficult to imagine that such activities should not have come to the notice of the Lahore Sardars and caused thereby a provocation in their minds. Nor were the Sikhs ignorant of the character of Charles Napier himself, who had just recently conquered and annexed Sind, and that too so treacherously and shamelessly.

"The Sikhs," writes Cunningham, "thus considered that the fixed policy of the English was territorial aggrandizement"[16] and this belief strengthened in their mind yet further when "in the summer of 1845 some horsemen from Multan crossed a few miles into Sindh territory in pursuit of certain marauders. The boundry of the two provinces between the Indus and the hills is no where defined, and the object of the few troopers was evident, but the Governor, Sir Charles Napier, immediately ordered the wing of a regiment to Kushmor, a few miles below Rojhan, to preserve the integrity of his frontier from violation. The Lahore authorities were indeed put upon guard, but they did not admit the sufficiency of the reason given, and they looked upon the prompt measure of the conqueror of Sindh as one more proof of the desire to bring about a war with the Punjab."[17]

Yet another provocation was given to the Sikh just this time, when some villagers in the Sikh territory towards Ludhiana were captured by the British on the plea that some criminals had escaped therefor whose recovery the Sikhs had refused to co-operate.

Mr. Clerk was replaced by Lt. Col. Richmond in June 1843 and the latter by Major Broadfoot in November 1841, as the British agent at Lahore. Such swift changes purplexed the Sikhs, and yet more so

when the out-spoken Broadfoot declared that the cis-Sutlej possessions of Lahore should be under the protection of the British equally with Patiala and other chiefships of the reign.[18] He "avowed that he had arranged to occupy the Lahore territory, cis-Sutlej, in case anything should happen to Daleep Singh who was then ill (with smallpox). And he forbade the Durbar to send any troops over for any purpose, whatever."[19]

Not only Broadfoot "acted as if the Lahore territories Cis-Sutlej, were entirely under his control, but, as I now learn for the first time from his biography," thus adds Campbell, "he seems to have set up a format claim to such a control, and asserted that this Lahore territory was just as much under his jurisdiction, as he called it, as any of the small protected states...I can only say that I cannot find a word in the treaties or agreements of any kind to support it, and in all my connection with the office never saw anything to justify it."[20]

Giving a further account of Broadfoots's aggressive policy, thus writes Campbell, Lal Singh Adalti, a Lahore Judge, crossed the Sutlej for official duty, in the Lahore territory at Talwandi; and when Broadfoot learnt of it he "roughly and very perempotorily ordered the Sikh party back over the river. Lal Singh, not willing to risk a collision, obeyed, returned to the river and embarked his men. But Broadfoot, not satisfied with this, followed them in person....At least one shot was fired the Sikh leaders were captured and detained. The shot then fired has been described as the first in the Sikh War."[21]

II. THE PUNJAB TRADERS

There were, however other factors as well, which led to the first Anglo-Sikh War. The traders and capitalists of a country, have never been the great lovers of her political freedom. Their freedom lies in the free opportunities to collect wealth, and for this, they would bother little, whether they are placed under a national or an alien rule. The Punjabi traders and capitalists, whether Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims, were made of no different aliment in this respect. British India was a big country, as compared to the Punjab of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and therefore it offered greater opportunities to carry gods from one place to the other, than the latter could. Moreover the Maharaja never seemed to have been an apologist for this class. He rather, never permitted them to

grow fabulously rich and exploit the lower classes of the country.[22] Naturally enough, therefore during the very life time of the Maharaja, their conspiracies began with the British. After the Maharaja's death there was a free correspondence between some of these traitors and some Englishmen in the British India. And there is no doubt that the British governmental authorities too listened these traders with interest. These traders too, therefore played their part in developing British interest in the Punjab, and in hastening the pace towards the war catastrophe.

III. THE SIKH ARMY

"The Sikh is naturally a soldier," wrote M 'Gregor, "and cares for no other employment, which he is forbidden by the tenets of his religion to adopt. The sole aim of his life is to fight, and, however idle and dissipated he may become, he never forgets a science to which he has devoted his whole time and attention." Any clash with the English, therefore, if it came, would be welcome.

The Sikh army, as we have quoted Payne elsewhere, became self-governing body by the time of Sher Singh. Its affairs were conducted by panchayats, or councils of "five" representing each company, and elected by the soldiers themselves. "In those days power was a dangerous possession. Every State official knew that to incur the displeasure of the army was equivalent to signing his own death warrant."[23] And again writes Sir Charles Gough, "they were under no efficient control, the rulers not venturing to treat them with a strong hand, and the regiments began mutinying and deposing their officers."[24] This chaotic and disorganised state of affairs, robbed the army soldiers of their reason and put them on blind faith in themselves. So much so that, the Lahore chiefs being threatened for their existence, began to put them on road to self-destruction by inspiring them for war against the English. The Khalsa was thus urged to accept the British challenge, which the latter had been giving for long by their provocations, and by an aggressive policy against the Punjab. And this was done at that time, when the Khalsa was neither disciplined nor had they an efficient leadership.

And again, the Tripartite Treaty had been signed between the English, Shah Shuja and Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1838[25] to reinstate

the Shah on the Afghan throne. In 1839, the British forces marched into that country and with their help, the Shah entered Kabul on 7th August 1839; Dost Mohammad, the old ruler having evacuated four days earlier. From outside, the things seemed settled and the atmosphere seemed calm. But below the surface, the Afghan discontentment was brewing, and the eruption took place in November 1841, when a mob only of about 100 Afghans attacked the house of Burnes at Kabul and murdered him. On 23rd November, 1841 the English were signally defeated at Bamaru. Macnaughten signed a humiliating treaty on 11th December, whereby he agreed to withdraw his forces from the country forth-with. The departure date was fixed as 22nd December, but when Macnaughten delayed, the Afghans attacked him and he lost his life. The English retreated and soon, as P.E. Roberts writes, "the retreat became a rout, the rout a massacre."[26] This episode cost the British "15 millions sterling and 20,000 lives" writes Ishwari Prasad. And thing ave an under encouragement to the Khalsa army. If the British could be defeated at the hands of the Afghans, whom the Khalsa army given a crushing defeat on several times, the superiority of the Khalsa army over the British army was definitely established. This was a natural reaction in all military minds. The ... of the British invincibility was exploded, and the Khalsa must settle their old score with them. But this was an encouragement simply ill-timed. The Khalsa army got it when there were only inefficient hands and traitors to lead them. And this was one of the factors which precipitated the first Anglo-Sikh war.

And more yet. The British preparations at the border enraged them. "The Khalsa will not allow his land to be converted into a battle-field," and for this the initiative had to be taken by them to kill the British lion in his own den.

"At the same time," writes Gough, "the gravity of the situation was increased by the fear that the very high rate of pay which the Sikh soldiery had extracted for themselves, and the general success which had attended their insubordination, was having an injurious effect on the morale of the sepoys in the British army."[27] Not only this. The Punjab authorities themselves were hard put to it. The monthly military expenditure, thus according to Payne, which in Ranjit Singh's time was 4 lakh rupees, had increased now to 9 lakh, and the State income

at the same time had fallen to its lowest ebb.[28] It was a difficult problem for the inefficient Lahore officials to face, and the British grew apprehensive that they might instigate the Khalsa for troubles in the South-East, for which the British authorities had been clamouring for long.

The indisciplined and disorganised State of affairs in the Khalsa army, and failure on the part of the Lahore authorities to meet the situation was thus a factor leading to the catastrophe, which could have been avoided.

IV. THE LAHORE CHIEFS

Moved "as much by jealousy of one another as by a common dread of the army, the chiefs of the Punjab clung to wealth and ease rather than to honour and independence."

Raja Hira Singh, the young wazir, only 25 years of age, who had brought to the throne of Lahore the young king, Maharaja Dalip Singh only eight years of age, though a man of good habits of reflection and thoughtfulness, which he had acquired from the Lion of the Punjab, the one eyed monarch, was yet a young man of hypocrisy and shrewdness of his father Raja Dhian Singh. Too much given to the habit of wearing jewellery, and rather of an effeminate appearance, although a man of considerable wit and genius and with great probabilties of being a success in the State-craft, yet unfortunately he fell under the influence of Pandit Julla Missar, a fanatic Brahmin of the mountains, professing to be a giant in astrological knowledge, who intoxicated the young Raja with false prophecies and heretic dreams Considering the young Raja Hira Singh a stripling and too much inexperienced and incapable of discharging the high duties of wazarat entrusted to him, Rani Jindan countenanced by her brother Jawahar Singh and some other Sardars, encouraged her uncle Raja Suchet Singh to aspire for the office. Raja Suchet Singh, the younger brother of Raja Gulab Singh had rancorous and inveterate enmity with his nephew Raja Hira Singh, which had started in the days of the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When Pandit Julla heard of these plans he felt his position endangered alongwith that of his patron. In order to save the position, Pandit Julla advised the young Raja to take the necessary

precautionary measures, before the efforts could he made by the opposite party to materialise their plans.

Raja Hira Singh considered that the best way of saving his position, was to increase his popularity with the soldiery. He cleared the arrears of their pay forthwith and added further, an amount of Rs. 2-8-0 in the pay of a common soldier.

Besides this, Raja Hira Singh requested his uncle Gulab Singh also to be present in the capital. The latter reached Lahore on November 10, 1843, and having been honourably received at the court succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between Raja Hira Singh and some other nobles of the court, such as Lehna Singh Majithia, who were suspected of having a hand in the conspiracy to dispossess Hira Singh of his office. But soon Gulab Singh began to behave in such manners as if he cared little whether the high office of wazarat was held by his brother or nephew, so long as his own independence was secure.

In the mean-while, Suchet Singh entered into conspiracy with Jawahir Singh, and induced him to mount an elephant with the young Maharaja, his nephew, in his arms, at a review of the Khalsa troops and complain to them of the ill-treatment which was meted out by the Prime Minister and his party to the royal child. Jawahir Singh choose a special hour of an evening for the purpose, mounted an elephant and appealed to the Khalsa as it had been planned. But in his anxiousness to dislodge Hira Singh, he went to such extent as even to threaten that if the Khalsa did not give a prompt support to him, he alongwith his nephew, would be forced to seek the British protection across the river Sutlej.

Fortunately for Hira Singh the Khalsa troops were at this time under the command of a Brahmin, the father-in-law of Julla, Missar Jodha Ram. Apprehensive that Gulab Singh may not actually handover the child to the British at Ferozepur, during the same night, the council of Panches of the army was convened as a result of which, both Jawahir Singh and Suchet Singh were declared to be traitors to the Sikh State, whose object was to invite British Government in the Punjab. Early the next morning, both Maharaja Dalip Singh and his maternal uncle Jawahir Singh were brought back to the city. At the

time of young Maharaja's entry into the city, a salute of 101 guns was fired and Jawahir Singh was put into iron chains and placed in close confinement. Suchet Singh, however due to his strength and influence and due to the presence in the city of his powerful brother Gulab Singh, was not touched. Soon after, both the brothers retired to Jammu. Before withdrawing, however the crafty Gulab Singh contrived to secure a huge amount of silver and gold and a great number of very valuable jewels and other riches which Hira Singh had hoarded up for himself and which his late father, Dhian Singh had left behind. On reaching his State, his eyes fell upon the riches of his childless brother Suchet Singh as well and soon the latter was contrived into publicly declaring Ram Bhir Singh, commonly known as Mian Pino, the youngest son of Gulab Singh, to have been adopted as son by him. Another immense fortune was thus secured to Gulab Singh from his brother Suchet Singh.

Just this time, Pandit Julla's impending plans to poison the young Maharaja Dalip Singh to death and put the son of Maharaja Sher Singh's widow on the throne instead, having been discovered, Maharani Jindan suppressed the evil in the bud.

Just about this time, Hira Singh was involved in another trouble. Kashmira Singh and Peshora Singh, the two adopted sons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who held Sialkot and Gujranwala respectively as their patrimony from their father, were supposed by certain persons to be having better claims to the throne than Maharaja Dalip Singh. To entangle them in troubles, Hira Singh bribed Kapur Singh, the Kardar of Sialkot under Kashmira Singh, to his favour. He made several disclosures, as a result of which the two brothers were charged of having complicity in the Sandhanwalia's plot which had resulted in the assassination of Maharaja Sher Singh. Raja Gulab Singh was ordered to seize their persons and property and realise from them a fine of 50 lakh of rupees. But since even the adopted sons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, had the profoundest respect of the Khalsa, due to the dread of the latter's resentment, this fine was reduced to 20,000 rupees and they were restored to their Jagirs, with the condition that they would not put Kapur Singh to any trouble. Soon after their restoration, however the unfaithful servant Kapur Singh, was beaten by his master to death. Hira Singh got another pretext for an action against them and ordered on behalf of the Darbar, Gulab Singh to invade their

territory. But the brothers by this time had made their military preperations and inflicted a signal defeat upon the forces of Gulab Singh. Gulab Singh requested reinforcement from Lahore. But the Khalsa would not consent to march against the brothers. Some Dogra troops and two of the Mohammedan battalions were despatched, but they also remained lukewarm for the fear lest the Khalsa be alienated against them an old battalion of Raja Dhian Singh had to be sent as reinforcement, with the help of which, after besieging the fort at Sialkot, Gulab Singh reduced the brothers who gave themselves up to the besiegers. They were permitted to vacate the fort alongwith their family and leave for the Manjha country.

While Gulab Singh was a success against these sons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Sialkot, the Khalsa army which had refused to participate in an action against the brothers, grew furious, as the affairs at Sialkot prolonged by. Fearing lest the sons of the Maharaja be put to death, the Khalsa made Hira Singh's life at Lahore very precarious. They watched his movements with vigilance and for three or four days he was practically confined to his private residence, not being permitted to move out by the Khalsa. Not till they learnt that the lives of the brothers were safe and not till they were assured that Pandit Julla would not in future be permitted to have his obnoxious interference in the State affairs, that the Minister was released. Further, as a price of his ransom, the Rani's brother, Jawahir Singh was got released by the Khalsa from confinement.

Raja Hira Singh fell into strait circumstances due to some other reasons as well. Arrears of revenue to the Lahore Darbar from many chiefs such as Diwan Mul Raj and even Gulab Singh were rising. Some troops at Peshawar, not having been able to get their desire for increased pay satisfied, rebelled and joined the forces of Kashmira Singh and Peshora Singh. The Darbar faced an acute shortage of money. Pandit Julla checked up the financial records, dismissed some European officers from the State service as a mark of economy, and the chiefs near Lahore were pressed for money. This made both Pandit Julla and Raja Hira Singh unpopular, and as the emissaries of Raja Suchet Singh were already at work amongst some battalions, they got Khalsa invite him to come to Lahore with a promise that they would help him replace Hira Singh. A similar help was promised by some

chiefs of the Lahore Darbar as well. And on this assurance Suchet Singh reached Shahdara on March 26, 1843, sending a message to the Khalsa that he had come. But the temper of the Khalsa troops was never reliable in those days of confusion. They had already changed their minds on the entreaties of Raja Hira Singh, who according to Latif, "receiving an intelligence of the arrival of his uncle on the banks of the Ravi, collected the panches of the army and standing before them, with folded arms and every sign of humility and submissiveness, addressed them in the following terms:

"Khalsa Ji ! the son of your old Minister and the adopted son of your old Maharaja now stands in your presence as a suppliant. Tell him, I beg you, what fault he has committed, to punish which, you have invited his uncle, his greatest enemy and your inveterate foe, being as you are aware, a staunch ally of the Feringi. If you want to kill me, here is the sword, and I give you full liberty at once to sever my head from my body. It would be honour to me to die at the hands of the brave Khalsa....

"This coupled with the promise of a reward of one gold butki to each soldier, infantry and cavalry, and one gold Kantha (necklace) to each officer, was enough to rouse the spirit of the Khalsa, who swore a fresh allegiance to the wazir and the extirpation of his uncle."[29]

Undeterred by these developments, however and determined not to retreat this time thus insulted, Raja Suchet Singh, leaving main body of his troops at Shahdara, and accompanied by about 400 soldiers, foot and horse and Rai Kesri Singh, his principal adviser, crossed the Ravi, and took up a position at the mausoleum of Mian Wadda near Lahore. The next morning, the mausoleum was besieged by the Khalsa troops, consisting of about 15,000 infantry, about 4,000 cavalry and 56 pieces of artillery. Many of his troops having deserted him and fled during the night, Raja Suchet Singh at this time, was left with only 45 soldiers to fight for him. And he resolved to fight. The passage from Ravi was cut off, lest Suchet Singh's levies from adjacent hills might join him and an assault was made upon the mausoleum with a tremendous cannonade upon its walls. After hearing some passages from the holy Granth, Raja Suchet Singh dashed at the head of his handful soldiers in front of the huge advancing columns of the Khalsa. He challenged them to come one by one and have a fair trial with him.

For a moment, as a result of such gallant behaviour of Suchet Singh, the front columns of the Khalsa army were struck with awe. The handful of his brave soldiers advanced upon these troops and in a moment's time, more than thirty of the front column lay dead. The further desperate valour displayed by the soldiers, caused a panic amongst the Khalsa army. But this state of affairs could not continue for a long time and soon Raja Suchet Singh and entire number of his 43 faithful soldiers, with the exception of only one who survived badly wounded, were done to death.

Hira Singh's victory over Raja Suchet Singh was complete, the troops were ordered back to their quarters and the promised prizes were distributed among the soldiers and the officers.

Yet, another storm for Raja Hira Singh was in the making. Sardar Attar Singh Sandhanwalia, the brother (or nephew ?) of Ajit Singh, had been still at large. On May 2, 1844, he recrossed the river Sutlej and joined Bawa Bir Singh, a famous holy man of the Manjha country whose personal military strength, alongwith that of some chiefs who had been disgraced by the Darbar and were given a protection by him, was about 3,000 men, infantry and cavalry, and three guns. Attar Singh's aspiration was to benefit from the confusion at the Darbar and occupy the office of the Chief Minister himself. The Bawa supported him and addressed a secret circular letter to the leaders in the army and some chiefs of the Darbar, in which he made a mention as to how the Dogra ascendency and the incapability of the child Dalip Singh had wrecked peace in the country, and forwarded that amongst the kinds men of the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh Attar Singh was the most capable, man, and therefore he should be given the charge of the government. The letters, however were intercepted by Hira Singh. In the mean while the disaffected brothers Peshora Singh and Kashmira Singh had also joined the rebellious forces, and made the situation yet more threatening for him. He promptly prepared a large expedition and despatched it against the rebels under the charge of General Mian Labh Singh. The Khalsa troops, before they marched, expressly laid down that they would not injur in any manner the holy Bawa. Yet when they invaded, the Bawa was one among the first victims, "one of whose legs was carried away by a cannon ball," and latter his immense treasures too were plundered. Attar Singh and Prince Kashmira Singh also fell in the field. And witnessing his brother's fate, Peshora Singh

repaired to the Darbar and made his submission. He was forgiven and his property and jagir were restored to him.

For a time, tranquility reigned once again and Hira Singh looked forward to a promising future. But bitter differences arose between Raja Hira Singh and his uncle Gulab Singh regarding the division of the property left by Suchet Singh. The situation took a serious turn and Raja Hira Singh sent twenty battalions of infantry to Jammu. A corresponding number of cavalry and artillery were also despatched. The ugly situation, however was avoided when Bhai Ram Singh, Sheikh Immam-ud-din and Dewan Dina Nath brought about an understanding between the two, Raja Gulab Singh sending Mian Sohan Singh, his eldest son, as hostage to Raja Hira Singh and the latter sending to Gulab Singh his younger brother, Mian Jawahir Singh, in the same capacity.

Raja Hira Singh thus reached the height of his career and influence. But he was, again, not destined to rule in peace for a long time. The attitude of his own and that of his family priest, and the tutor of his sons, Pandit Julla, in whose crafty and ambitious hands, he had become simply a headless tool, alienated almost all the chiefs of the Darbar. Lahna Singh Majithia, a very capable and sagacious Sardar, rather quitted Punjab on a pretext of visiting Hardwar. The only other important chief left being Lal Singh, the favourite of Maharani Jindan herself. Pandit Julla's dealings with Lal Singh were very cordial, having exchanged turbans with him, but he talked of the Rani herself with a scant respect, and hated her brother, Jawahir Singh, who which-drew himself to Amritsar in time, and by inciting the Akalis and some other fanatics, and later by getting the promises of support from the Khalsa troops themselves, he hatched out a plot to finish the Dogra influence at Lahore. Lal Singh leaving his friendship with Julla, entered into conspiracy with the Rani, who herself was tired of the Dogra influence. They supplied money to Jawahir Singh for distribution among Nihangs and other fanatics, to make them take up their cause.

One morning, on the first day of the month, the Rani, as usual, distributed golden pieces to the poor, for the good health of the young Maharaja. Pandit Jalla, hearing of it, threatened and abused her very grossly. Jawahir Singh taking the advantage, appealed to the Khalsa

army against this insult to the wife of the late Maharaja, whom they loved so much. The Khalsa army was in rage, and early one morning, at a review of the troops, Jawahar Singh having placed himself at, the head of the Khalsa troops, demanded Pandit Julla to be immediately handed over to him. Raja Hira Singh, however flatly refused, but sensing the brewing troubles, the Raja decided immediately for a flight to save his life. Putting all his valuables on elephants, accompanied by Pandit Julla and Pandit Sohan Singh and attended by about four hundered horse and foot, he lift for Jammu on the morning of 21st December 1844, under the pretext of visiting Mian Mir, to inspect the forces stationed there. He had, however hardly reached Taxali Gate of the city, when the Sikh regiments sounded the trumpets saluting Jawahir Singh to wazarat. Hira Singh having heard the trumpets, hastened his pace, but was overtaken about 600 yards from the Shahdara village by a large party of horse-men. As the enemy troops approached Hira Singh, he emptied some of his bags of ashrafis upon them, and while the troops were engaged in picking them up, he hastened out of their reach. But once again the troops overtook him, again he emptied his bags and the practice continued for a distance of about 12 kos, when Pandit Julla fell from his horse out of exhaustion and was cut to pieces. Some distance away, Hira Singh dismounted to quench his thirst in a village. The village was surrounded by General Venturas' Dragoons, and on the order of Jawahir Singh, and set on fire. Hira Singh hearing of it, remounted his horse, but was cut to pieces in his attempt to escape. The heads of Hira Singh, Pandit Julla and Sohan Singh were brought back. Jawahir Singh made his triumphant entry into the capital at about mid-day, when he was given an enthusiastic reception. These heads were submitted to the greatest ignominy, more so that of Julla, which was carried from house to house, spat upon and thrown to dogs. The others were hanged at the gates of the town, and later thrown into the private room of Raja Dhian Singh, from where they were recovered later by Raja Gulab Singh at the time of the British occupation of Lahore.

Jawahir Singh becomes Wazir

After this victory of Jawahir Singh with the help of the Khalsa troops, his first concern was to continue himself in the Khalsa's favour. To do this, he got the golden utensils in the Royal Toshakhana

immediately melted and preparing of them the golden bracelets, he distributed them among the Khalsa troops. This won him further the acclaims of the soldiers. Shortly after this the Darbar demanded of Gulab Singh the restoration of all the property of Hira Singh and Suchet Singh and imposed upon him further, a fine of three crore rupees. Gulab Singh having refused to comply, the Khalsa army was ordered to march on Jammu. In the first engagement between the Khalsa and the Dogras. Fateh Singh Man, the beloved leader of the Khalsa lost his life. This infuriated the Khalsa, who proceeded violently ahead. Gulab Singh conscious of his weakness, changed his tactics. Bringing with him his nephew, Mian Jawahir Singh, who was respected by the Khalsa, he fell on knees before the panches and begged to be pardoned. His free distribution of money among the soldiers, and these tactics, won him a success, and being safely carried to Lahore, he was honourably received by the Maharani. Here by his charming manners and the rendering of full accounts and by his humble submissions he was able to win the Rani's heart to such an extent that she actually offered him the office of wazir, which had not so far been formally invested on her brother. Jawahir Singh's will, however prevailed and Gulab Singh unnecessarily won the displeasure of this Sardar. As the wind began to blow against him, he decided to leave Lahore immediately but before doing that he was shorn of much of his power and wealth. He had to give up all the property of Suchet Singh and Hira Singh, and being dispossessed of many other rights and privileges, he promised to pay the fine of 68 lakh rupees to the Darbar and left Lahore after about five month's sojourn in much disgust and dismay.

Soon, however Jawahir Singh had to face another trouble. Crafty Gulab Singh after having reached his hill State, began to incite Peshora Singh, the reputed son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who was at that time leading a retired life at Gujranwala—his Jagir, to renew his claims on the Punjab throne. On the other hand, he advised Jawahir Singh to do away with him, some how or the other, if he desired to have a secure future. Peshora Singh proceeded to Lahore, where he was honourably received by the Rani, but having met with a cold reception from the wazir, he immediately retired to General Avitabile's house, outside the city, where he was surrounded by the panches of the army and promised help. Seeing this serious drift against him, the wazir

consulted his sister and distributed, once again, huge amount of money among the soldiers and won them back. The Khalsa asked the prince to leave and wait for a more favourable opportunity.

Peshora Singh went back, but soon after, having occupied the fort of Attock, proclaimed himself as Maharaja and began to contact Dost Mohammad of Kabul. Gulab Singh had lost one opportunity, but got another and advised the wazir to get the prince removed from his way once for all Jawahir Singh sent Khalsa troops against the prince, but he was held by the Khalsa in so high respect that they refused at his sight to fight against him. Chuttur Singh Attariwala, the father-in-law of Dalip Singh, and Fatteh Khan Tiwan, a close friend of the wazir, were then ordered to march against the prince. The two marched upon Attock, but on reaching there, found the power of the prince too formidable and deciding to play diplomacy, started to negotiate with him. The negtiations continued for about ten days, as a result of which, the prince was put off his guard. The sardar entered the fort, and at night. got him strangled to death.

When Jawahir Singh received this news, despite the advice of his seosoned friends, he thundered the city with joyous royal salutes and got it profusely illuminated in the night. This was too much for the Khalsa to tolerate and their rage passed all bounds. The Dogra element lost no opportunity of adding fuel to the fire, and the deputies of the Khalsa army were even promised rich rewards for an action against the wazir.

Leaders of the Khalsa army now despatched messengers to the wazir, desiring his presene before them. The wazir, confident that he would once again be able to bribe the soldiers, slept over them, little knowing that rich rewards had already been promised to them by the Dogras. A portion of the army marched upon the fort. Their bugles and drums aroused him from the foolish slumber, and having consulted his sister, he immediately came out of the fort. Seating himself upon an elephant with the child Maharaja on his lap, and his sister following him on another elephant, the wazir proceeded in the midst of the soldiers in a vain hope that the presence of his sister and the Maharaja would save him from the terrible destiny that awaited. Working on a set plan, the wazir was saluted by the soldiers all around, but when he reached in the thick of them the bugles and the drums sounded a

signal for action. The Wazir's elephant was abruptly stopped and its driver forced to make it kneel. The wazir bowed in utter helplessness for forgiveness but the child Maharaja being ruthlessly pulled out of his lap, a sword was plunged into his body and a bullet sent into his brain. He was mercillesly dragged, and molested, his advisers killed at the spot, and the Rani forced to retire to tents nearby. This happened in the afternoon of 21st September, 1845. As the dawn broke on 22nd September, the Rani was permitted to see the molested, disfigured and soiled body of her brother. It was a heart-rending scene when, in the words of Latif, 'her lamentations and painful cries were renewed with a violence which moved the by-standers to pity and melted even the iron hearts of those who had been instrumental in causing her brother's murder. Weeping bitterly she threw herself and her child on the body of her brother, and when, partly by entreaties and partly by force, she was separated from the corpse, she rolled upon the ground, tearing her hair and her clothes."[30] The corpse was carried to the funeral pyre. Two of the wazir's Ranis and three of his slave girls, committed themselves to fire along the wazir's body. It was a horrible scene, and showed the diplorable extent to which the morale of the soldiers had fallen. Latif writes, "As these poor defenceless women were marching in solemn procession to the alter, with all their money and jewellery in open trays, carried by men on either side of them, for the purpose of distribution in charity, these armed ruffians remorselessly plundered them, and as the unfortunate women were mounting the funeral pyre, these villainous guards tore away their nose and ear—ornaments (which were worn in strict conformity with their religion) from their persons. The cries and remonstrances of the women at the indignities to which they were subjected were treated by those monsters as if they had been the variest ribaldry. Not satisfied with what they had already robbed, they actually snatched from the fire the trinkets and embroidery on their costly attire. The helpless victims, stretching their hands towards heaven, cursed the whole Sikh nation to which the savages belonged."[31]

The Rani continued conducting the State affairs with Teja Singh the Commander-in-Chief, Lal Singh as executive Minister and she herself as regent. But she saw her perilous situation, writes Latif. "With an empty treasury and the resources of the kingdom exhausted, she was left in no position to feed the rapacity of the turbulent Sikh

soldiers, who now openly talked of proclaiming the infant son of Sher Singh, as Maharaja of the Punjab. To divert their attention in another direction, as also to break their union and power, the Rani and her friends originated the proposal of crossing the Sutlej to make war on the British Government."[32] Dr. G.C Narang also writes: the Rani "put herself in touch with British authorities and instigated them to provoke the Sikhs to war by taking possession of a part of the Sikh territory close to the left bank of Sutlej."[33] The point was as Gough writes, "the Khalsa was to be urged to challenge the British. If it were shattered, the court would be rid of its masters; if triumphant, the court would claim the credit."[34]

The Maharani and her advisers may actually have instigated the soldiers to cross the Sutlej. But even if it was so, it was no aggression against the British. Aggression by the English against the Punjab, in fact, had already been committed. Provocations had been given to the true lovers of the national honour and integrity. And, whereas a strong and seasoned ruler of Lahore like Ranjit Singh should have replied to this aggression at a more opportune time and in a more disciplined manner, the present Lahore rulers did so out of a mere desperation. There was no war planning. They Simply took a chance and lost it, as it was bound to be.

Robertson had predicted, "the enterprising commercial spirit of the English, and the martial ardour of the Sikhs, who possess the energy natural to men in the earlier stages of the society, can hardly fail to lead sooner or latter to open hostility." And this proved correct.

Thus different factors led to the First Anglo-Sikh war. There is no doubt that the British had been following an aggressive policy towards the Punjab from an early time, and this created disaffection in the minds of the Lahore chiefs and the Khalsa army. Ranjit Singh was wise and managed to keep the British at an arm's length. But his successors too immature and inexperienced, the chiefs of the Lahore Darbar too foolish and selfish, the Khalsa army too indisciplined and untamed, and all with inadequate resources and ill—planned strategy, threw themselves into the wide opened mouth of the lion of British imperialism. The lion was too anxious to swallow, the victim to fool to understand. Both walked towards each other, and the consequences were natural.

(B) THE SIKH DEFEAT

Details of the first Anglo-Sikh War may not be given here, for which the reader may be referred to 'The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars,' by General Sir Charles Gough and Arthur D. Innes; 'The life and Campaigns of Hugh, First Viscount Gough,' by R.S. Rait; The Despatches of Viscount Hardinge, Lord Gough and Henry Smith, 1846, and the biographies of Lord Dalhousie and Viscount Hardinge. A brief reference may, however be made here to causes of the Sikh defeat.

I. THE CAUSES

The first and the most important factor leading to the failure of the Khalsa army was the treachery and incapability of their own leaders. Immediately after the Khalsa army crossed the river Sutlej, the best course for them should have been to attack Ferozepure. Had they done so, thus writes ludlow, "our garrison of 8,000 men would have been destroyed and the victorious 60,000 would have fallen on Sir Henry Hardinge, who had then but 8,000."[35] But instead of doing that Lal Singh, the traitor wazir of Lahore, who had already been in correspondence with the British Political Agent, and who was determined to win British favour, addressed Captain Peter Nicholson, the Assisstant Agent at Ferozepur thus:

"I have crossed the Sikh army. You know my friendship for the British. Tell me what to do?"

To which Nicholson replied. "Do not attack Ferozepur. Halt as many days as you can, and then march towards the Governor-General.

It was a tregedy indeed. The Sikhs thus lost the chance for a sure victory. "The treason saved the English from a sure defeat."[36] The object of Lal Singh, and Tej Singh who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh forces, "was not to compromise themselves with the English by destroying an isolated division, but to get their own troops dispersed by the converging forces of their opponents."[37]

The army itself, however "was filled with a vehemently hostile feeling towards the British," thus writes Gough, "and a strong sense of self-confidence and of loyalty to the Khalsa. Loyalty to the Darbar it had none; its vows were to the Khalsa, its vows were to the Sikh brotherhood,....But this turbulent and insubordinate body, recklessly

democratic in its political treatment of the Government was fully alive to the impossibility of democratic methods in the field; and the Panchayats now laid aside their assumed control, formally accepting the purely military purposes."[38]

The earnestness of the Sikh army, however was of no avail against the treachery of the leaders in whom they had reposed their confidence. As arranged, Lal Singh stayed on till Sir Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, brought his main army actually in the field. The Ambala and Ludhiana divisions of the British army arrived at Mudki, twenty miles to the south-east of Ferozepur, where the first action took place on December 18, 1845. Lal Singh headed an attack against the British army with his full force, with a sister object that "the British might have a full and fair opportunity of destroying them."[39] And in the thick of the battle, while "the fight was going on with great fierceness on both sides," writes Latif, "Lal Singh, in accordance with his original design, suddenly abandoned the field, leaving the Sikhs to fight as their valour might prompt."[40] The hardy not discouraged by the treachery of their Commander, continued the conflict with undiminished energy and devotion. But they could not do so for a long time under such state of affairs, and ultimately they had to give way, being driven from post to post at the point of bayonet. "The battle lasted until an hour and a half of dim star light, amidst clouds of dust from the sandy plains." The British purchased the victory at a very high price, and that too, thus writes Pearson, "because Lal Singh according to plan, took no interest in the battle after issuing the order to attack."[41]

The second action was fought at Ferozshahr, a village about ten miles both from Mudki and Ferozepur, on December, 21, 1845. The attack this time was led by the British, with full preparations and a confidence, that helped by the Sikh traitors, they would be able to win an easy victory. But they were mistaken in this. The Sikh army this time again, was led by Lal Singh, assisted by Tej Singh. But despite the unworthy intentions of their leaders, the resistance the British met from them was wholly unexpected, and the British started with astonishment. The attack was led by the British at about three o' clock, but the fight continued till darkness fell. The obstinacy and persistency with which the Sikhs carried on their contest, threw the English into confusion and disorder.

The night that ensued was truly designated a "night of terrors. "The night of the 21st December," thus wrote Sir Henry, "was the most extraordinary of my life. I bivouacked with the men without food and covering and our nights were bitter cold." The British lost their heart so completely that they were even planning an unconditional surrender to the Sikhs. Thus wrote Robert Cust, in his journal on December 22. "News came from the Governor-General that our attack of yesterday had failed, that affairs were desperate, that all-State papers were to be destroyed, and that if morning attack failed, all would be over; this was kept secret by Mr. Currie and we were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender to save the wounded, the part of the news that grieved me the most."[42]

The best course for the Sikhs at this time should have been to attack the British during the very night, and then end the game. But the Sikh leaders were not prepared to risk a victory against the British. As arranged, again, Lal Singh disappeared from the scene with guns and most of his men during the night. On the morning of December 22, the remnants of the Sikh forces were easily driven from their camp. But as the day advanced, the second wing of the Sikh army, commanded by Tej Singh, who had been urged by his zealous and sincere soldierly to fall upon the English, approached in battle-array, "and the wearied and famished English saw before them a desperate and, perhaps, useless struggle."[43] But Tej Singh was no better than Lal Singh in his treachery. Had he attacked, "the British could never have survived the on set of the thirty thousand fresh troops....But the Sikh commander hesitated," as previously arranged. "At eleven o'clock he opened fire on the left of his enemy's position, and again hesitated. Four hours later he threatened an attack on their right, and then, to the utter astonishment and intense satisfaction of the weary defenders, his whole force was seen to turn suddenly northwards and move off rapidly in the direction taken by the vanquished battalions of Lal Singh."[44] And thus did the destiny bestow a victory upon the British.

"The battle of Ferozeshahr was one of the most momentous, and certainly the hardest fought-out one, ever engaged in by the British in India." "It has been said," thus writes Gordon, "that the Sikhs then shook our Indian Empire to its base."

Just this time, as if encouraged by the help of the Sikh traitor, the Governor-General issued a proclamation on December 31, calling upon the natives of Hindustan, who had taken service under the Lahore Government, to quit their service at once. The proclamation ran thus "It is hereby proclaimed, that any non-commissioned officer or soldier of the Lahore Government who shall present himself before his Excellency the Governor-General, shall be immediately rewarded with the accustomed liberality, and shall have the benefit of invalid pension; and, if engaged in law suit in a British Court of Justice, his case shall be immediately decided before another...."

Such declarations from the British, although they did confirm some of the Sikh leaders in the treacherous attitude that they were following, had little effect upon the morale of the common Sikh soldier. There was a lull in the storm, as the traitors among Sikhs had conspired to give the British a sufficient time to re-organise their Camp. Sardar Ranjodh Singh who was loyal to the Sikh standard, however took the opportunity and helped by Sardar Ajit Singh of Ladwa, attacked Ludhiana with 8,000 men and 70 guns, burning a portion of its contonment. The town was then very much under-garrisoned, and Sir Harry Smith, with a considerable body of troops, was ordered to march to its relief. The Sikhs, however intercepted him at Badhowal, in the way, killed a number of his men and captured the whole of his baggage on January 21, 1846.

The heavy loss suffered by the English at Badhowal made them indeed glance "firtively at one another," writes Cunningham. They "looked towards the east, their home; and the brows of English men themselves grew darker at the thought of struggles rather than triumphs...the leader of the beaten brigades saw before him a tarnished name after the labours of a life, nor was he met by many encouraging hopes of rapid retribution."[45]

On January 22, Ranjodh Singh withdrew to the Sutlej, and Sir Henry Smith immediately occupied the deserted position of the Sikhs. On January 28, he moved out to attack the Sikhs, who were found at the village of Aliwal at a distance of eight miles. While according to some writers he inflicted a crushing defeat upon Ranjodh Singh and thus retrieved his position, it is doubted that the action was more than a scrimmage. Still, however it was necessary to re-inforce the waning

morale of the British soldiers, and therefore, "As an Irishman would say," writes Dr. Andrew Adams, "we gained a disadvantage at Budiwal; by the baggage of the army falling into the hands of the enemy, that no exaggeration could well turn into a victory; but shortly afterwards, a few shots, and the charge of a squadron or two in pursuit of a host of retreating Sikhs, were magnified into a grand combat, and thus the plain of Aliwal has been recorded as the scene of one of India's Marathons."[46]

The last battle of the First Anglo-Sikh war, was fought at Sobraon, on February 10, 1846. Lal Singh had played his part and now came the turn of Gulab Singh to win the British favours. After the so called Sikh defeat at Alipur and their withdrawal to their own side of the river Sutlej, the Governor-General seemed to have contented himself for the time being with it. The British reputation had been saved and the aggressors pushed across the river into Their own territories just his time, however Gulab Singh appeared on the scene ostensibly on behalf of the Lahore Darbar and opened negotiations with the British . An understanding soon was reached that "the Sikh army should be attacked by the English and that when beaten it should be openly abandoned by its own government; and further, that the passage of the Sutlej should be unopposed and the road to the capital laid open to the victors. Under such circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason," writes Cunningham, "was the battle of Sobraon fought."

The Khalsa troops by this time had lost all confidence in their leaders. The Panches went in a body to Gulab Singh, "offering to make him minister, and begging him to proceed at once to the Sutlej and take over the chief command," little knowing that he was no better than Lal Singh and Tej Singh in his anxiousness to get the Khalsa destroyed. Having entered into agreement with the British, Gulab Singh "temporised with the Panches, without actually refusing to assume the command of the army, contrived from day to day to postpone till the hour he had been contemplating came—the hour when the army of the Khalsa had no further use for a commander."[47]

In the meanwhile, he stopped sending rations and supplies to the army. The army delegates met Maharani Jindan, to appraise her of the situation, and tell her how they were being starved. "The Maharani,

however" writes Gordon, "was getting desperate; the Khalsa was on her nerves; she was in terror at the thought of their returning. She with the little Maharaja Dalip Singh, received the deputation in Durbar and heard their appeal." She upbraided them as cowards, took off part of her dress and threw it among them, saying, "this is your dress. Remain at home; I will go and fight." The resolve to get them destroyed was known to them, but such was the stern democratic discipline of their army councils, such their devotion to their warlike faith, that determination even now animated every man. They fiercely reproached her and her courtiers. Addressing the Maharaja, they said, "We will go and die for you, your kingdom, and the Khalsaji," but to the others who had incited them to war and now taunted them with their folly in hoping to vanquish the conquerors of Hindustan, they said "we will leave you to answer to your God and your Guru, while we, deserted and betrayed as we are, will do what we can to preserve the independence of our country?"[48]

The Sikh army led by traitors, crossed the river Sutlej as planned, and the battle of Sobraon was fought on February 10. The British attacked the Sikhs thrice, but all the times they were successfully repulsed by the Sikhs. One more victory for the Sikhs should not have been unexpected for their valour and courage, when in the thick of the fight, Tej Singh and Lal Singh fled the field in fulfilment of their agreement with the British. The Khalsa was, thus, once again left to its own fate, deserted by the leaders, assailed on all sides by the enemy, without a hope of re-inforcement or supply. They fought as best as they could. But the circumstances limited their chances for victory. As if not satisfied with what the traitors had a ready done to their kinsfolk, with the previous consent of the enemy, Lal Singh and Tej Singh got the bridge of boats on the river broken. Thus robbing the Khalsa of the only escape in case defeated. The Khalsa was thus defeated and slaughtered, while its leaders stood aside unconcerned with their annihilation.

Thus was the British defeat once again turned into a victory, "by the convenient flight of Tej Singh who damaged the bridge of boats over the Sutlej on his way and so helped to drown a large number of his country men."[49]

Referring to the great slaughter of the Sikhs at Sobraon, Sir Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, himself commented: "Policy prevented my publicly recording my sentiments of the splendid gallantry of a fallen for, and I declare were it not from a conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice. I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body."[50]

Treachery of their own leaders was thus the main cause of the Sikh defeat. But the honesty and determination of Sir Gough and his men, to save the British name in India at any cost, cannot be passed unmentioned. The fortitude shown by them after a disaster at Badhowal and the presence of mind to take an opportunity, whenever it offered itself, was no doubt a factor which crowned the British with the final victory. Sir, Gough "was essentially a fighting general, a hard hitter, whose maxim was *"L 'audace, toujours l' audace.'* He grasped success. The generals, among them veterans of the Peninsula, Waterloo, and Afghanistan, were first and foremost in thick of battle, exposing their lives freely and rousing the daring of their men to the utmost by personal example, several of them falling "in the rapture of the strife," cheering on to victory."[51]

II. THE TREATY OF LAHORE

On 9th March, 1846, the Treaty of Lahore was signed between the British and the Lahore Darbar, the more essential terms of which may here be mentioned.

1. All the Sikh territories lying south of the river Sutlej, were handed over to the British.
2. The Jullundur Doab was likewise annexed by the British to their own dominion.

"The Governor-General desired not only to chastise the Sikhs for their past aggressions, but to over-awe them for the furture, and he had thus chosen the Beas as offering more commanding positions with reference to Lahore than the old boundary of the Sutlej," thus writes Cunningham.

3. An indemnity of Rs. 1½ crore was imposed upon the Lahore Darbar, which they being not able to pay, they had to handover to the British in its lieu, all the hill area

between the rivers Sutlej and Beas, including Kashmir and Hazara.

4. The Darbar would disband the rebellious forces, keeping only 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. 34 guns which the British had lost to the Sikhs, were restored to them.
5. The British troops would be allowed a free passage through the Punjab when necessary.

Dalip Singh was recognised as minor king of Lahore, Maharani Jindan was to be his regent and Lal Singh the Prime Minister of the Punjab.

Soon after, on March 11, 1846, to further strengthen the British hold on the Punjab, another treaty was dictated to the Darbar, under which:

1. An adequate British force would be stationed at Lahore, for the so called protection of the Maharaja. The force would be recalled in December 1846.
2. The British Government would respect the *bona fide* rights of the jagirdars in Lahore territories.
3. The British would be at liberty to retain any part of the State property in the forts situated in the ceded territories, by paying for it a fair compensation.

Besides the seven years old Maharaja the treaties were signed by seven other chiefs on behalf of the Darbar. And of these seven, two were the notorious Lal Singh and Tej Singh, and third, Bhai Ram Singh, an agent of Raja Gulab Singh.

At 4 p.m. on 9th of March, 1846, when the first treaty was signed with the Sikhs, the Governor-General declared that "the British Government desires to see a Sikh Government re-established, which may be able to control its army, protect its subjects, and willing to respect the rights of its neighbours.

"By this treaty, the Lahore Government has sufficient strength to resist and punish any native power which may venture to assail it, and to put down all internal commotions."[52]

Sir Henry Lawrance was appointed as the British Resident at Lahore, and it was only to be seen, how the British kept the promises thus made.

A passing reference may here be made as to how Raja Gulab Singh was rewarded by the British for the so valuable aid which he rendered them in helping them occupy Lahore. On March 15, 1846, the title of Maharaja was formally invested upon him. And on March 16, 1846, a separate treaty with Gulab Singh was concluded at Amritsar, by which the province of Kashmir was sold to him for one crore rupees, and a part of this money was paid by Gulab Singh from out of the treasury of Kashmir, which, Kashmir being part of the territory of Lahore Darbar, belonged in fact to Maharaja Dalip Singh. Commenting on this transaction writes Cunningham: this "transaction scarcely seems worthy of the British name and greatness, and the objections become stronger when it is considered that Gulab Singh had agreed to pay sixth eight lakhs of rupees (£ 680,000), as a fine to his paramount (Lahore Darbar), before the war broke out, and that the custom of the East as well as of the West requires the feudatory to aid his lord in foreign war and domestic strife. Gulab Singh ought thus to have paid the deficient million of money as a Lahore subject, instead of being put in possession of Lahore provinces as an independent prince." And further he writes, latter on even these "payments required from him were" reduced by a forth, and they were rendered still more easy of liquidation by considering him to be the heir to the money which his brother Suchet Singh had buried in Ferozepur."[53] It was indeed writes Gordon "a very had bargain for the Government, which unfortunately was rendered necessary by the political exigency of the moment."[54]

Lal Singh who became Prime Minister of the subdued Punjab, however was not satisfied with the prize he was able to get for all the slaughter he had been instrumental in bringing about in his kins-folk. He was jealous of Gulab Singh's elevation to the throne of Kashmir, and therefore, after signing the Treaty of Amritsar, when Gulab Singh attempted to enter Kashmir to occupy it in October, Sheikh Imam-ud-din, the Governor of the province was instigated by him to resist Gulab Singh. The matter being reported to the Governor-General, the British troops were immediately despatched to enforce obedience to the terms of the treaty. As a result, the rebellious governor submitted forth-with and even placed a documentary proof in the hands of Colonel Lawrence, that he had been incited by Lal Singh. Lal Singh's fate was

thus sealed. Being charged there and then in the council of the assembled Sardars, for having violated the terms of the Treaty of Lahore, he was removed from his office, dispossessed of his jagirs, and banished from the Punjab.

Thus did Gulab Singh succeed in occupying the province of Kashmir. "In the year 1808, Gulab Singh was earning three rupees a month and his rations as a common soldier in an obscure fortress on the banks of the Jhelum. He was now, while still under sixty years of age, the absolute monarch of 80,000 square miles of territory. If he was not at the top of the ladder of his ambition, he was certainly as high up on it as he deserved to be......whatever his faults, Gulab Singh was a statesman of proved ability."[55]

III. THE TREATY OF BHIROWAL

Under the Treaty of Lahore, the British were bound to withdraw their troops from the Punjab in December 1846. But before the stipulated date for their withdrawal came, they had already decided to continue their stay and strengthen their hold yet further upon the Punjab. But to carry the plan into effect, it was essential that dust must be thrown into the eyes of the people and they be made to believe that the British were doing nothing which the high principles of morality forbade. The proposal for the stay of the British troops in Lahore, till Dalip Singh became major, must originate with the Lahore chiefs, and the British must accept it only reluctantly. Sir Henry Lawrence, therefore desired of his Secretary, Frederick Currie, on the 12th of December. "Preserve in your line of making the Sikh Durbar propose the condition or rather their readiness to assent to any conditions imposed as the price of the continuance of our support. In the preamble of the supplementary Articles, this solicitation must clearly he their act."[56]

The Governor-General, Lord Hardinge, also issued instructions to Currie to make certain bogus military movements, as if the British troops were actually going to be withdrawn. "My object," he wrote, "is to give the Lahore Darbar a hint, that the Garrison is on the move."[57]

The Lahore chiefs were naturally reluctant to continue British troops in Lahore, and in this connection thus did Hardinge write to Currie: "The coyness of the Darbar is very natural; but it is very

important that the proposal should originate with them; and in any documents proceeding from them this admission must be stated in clear and unqualified terms; our reluctance to undertake a heavy responsibility must be set forth."[58]

Ultimately, therefore the British did succeed in manoeuvering the assent of the leading chiefs of Lahore. A conference of the chiefs was held on December 15, 1846, from which Maharani Jindan, from whom active opposition was feared, was studiedly excluded. Mr. Currie read out the British conditions, which were agreed to without any discussion or dissent. And thus was the Treaty of Bhairowal concluded and signed on the following day, the 16th of December.

It was laid down in the treaty:

1. The British forces would continue staying in Lahore till 4th September, 1854, when Dalip Singh would become 16 years of age; for which the Darbar would pay Rs. 22 lakh a year to meet the expenses.
2. Till Dalip Singh became major, the Punjab Government would be carried under the control of the British Resident, by a Regency Council of 8 Sardars, in which in the words of the Governor-General, he could make any change, "and appoint other."
3. Besides Lahore, the British troops could be put into any Sikh fortress, the occupation of which the Governor-General might feel necessary, for protection of the Maharaja's interests.

The Treaty of Bhairowal, thus, rang the death-knell of the Sikh power, and it "made the British the real masters of the Punjab."

In fact after signing the treaty, Hardinge himself wrote to Henry Lawrence on October 23, 1847: "In all our measures, taken during the minority, we must bear in mind that by the Treaty of Lahore, March, 1846, the Punjab never was intended to be an independent State. By the clause, I added, the chief of State can neither make war nor peace, nor exchange nor sell an acre of territory, nor admit an European officer, nor, in fact, perform any act without our permission. In fact, the native prince is in fetters, and our protection, and must do our bidding."[59]

The British intentions are clear.

THE SECOND ANGLO-SIKH WAR

(A) THE CAUSES

Six months after his appointment as Resident in Lahore, wrote Henry Lawrence: "I can certify to this people having settled down in a manner that could never have been hoped or believed of them." And in January 1848, when Lord Hardinge left for England, he assured Lord Dalhousie, his successor, that so far as human foresight could predict, "it would not be necessary to fire a gun in India for seven years to come."[60] But it was not long before Hardinge's prediction proved incorrect.

The Second Anglo-Sikh war started in 1848, and it ended in 1849 with the final annexation of the Punjab territories to the British Empire in India. It would be interesting to have a glance over the factors leading to this catastrophe.

I. THE SIKH POPULATION

Though "he population of the Punjab as a whole began to a appreciate the advantages of living under an orderly and just administration, the Sikhs themselves welcomed the new order of things with anything but enthusiasm. They felt that their position as the ruling community was being undermined. British methods of government might be superior to their own, but they did not want British methods, and the more popular these became the deeper grew their jealousy and resentment. Moreover the Hindu and Mohammedan communities derived greater benefit than they did from the reforms that were being instituted. Many of the more well-to-do Sikhs lived on rent-free lands, and it made no difference to them whether rates of assessment were high or low, unless they happened to be collectors of revenue, and then they preferred them to be high. Mohammedans and Hindus they were accustomed to regard as mere producers of revenue—not as fellow-subjects entitled to equal rights with themselves. Equality within the limits of the Khalsa was a doctrine which every Sikh was prepared to uphold, but the equality of all communities within the limits of the Punjab was the worst form of heresy."[61]

Moreover the British social reforms such as suppression of Sati system and that of female infanticide were regarded by all as an

interference in their religious practices, and this was the last thing which any one among them would tolerate. Little wonder, therefore that they considered the English hold on Punjab with anything but sympathy.

II. THE SIKH SOLDIERS

Nor did the Sikh soldiers take their defeat as anything more than a matter of chance. Thus writes Cunningham: While the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief remained at Lahore at the head of twenty thousand men, portions of the Sikh army came to the capital to be paid up and disbanded. The soldiers showed neither despondency of mutinous rebels nor the effrontery and indifference of mercenaries, and their manly deportment added lustre to that valour which the victors had dearly felt and generously extolled. The men talked of their defeat as the chance of war..."[62]

Moreover, even if some felt the Khalsa having been defeated, the treachery of their leaders was considered to be the only cause, but for which they should have taught the English a bitter lesson.

They had a full confidence in the future of the Khalsa. The Khalsa, they would say amid their humiliation, was just a child; and as the commonwealth of the Sikhs grew into youth, they were bound to be clothed by Guru Govind Singh with victory. And the time was not far ahead, when the Khalsa would reassert itself and thus rule the world.

Then the disbanded soldiers, although they had been paid their arrears by the Darbar, had not all been guided into peaceful employments; 'Many of these had, it is true, settled down to peaceful pursuits; but there was still a large number of them who were, as Lawrence himself described it, "afloat on the surface of society." These men lived by methods which were by no means facilitated by the growth of law and order, and every measure which tended to promote public security increased their discontent.[63]

And when these unemployed soldiers moved from village to village without an aim or idea, no welcome was accorded to them. They rather met taunts 'Tusi Khalsa ji purian pa aye,' which could never be palatable to those who had seen the age of chivalry under

the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh. If another chance for trial of strength with the British came, it would naturally be welcome.

III. THE LAHORE CHIEFS

Some of the Lahore chiefs too had their own dissatisfaction. Their "object was not to compromise themselves with the English by destroying an isolated division but to get their own troops dispersed by the covering forces of their opponents. Their desire was to be upheld as the ministers of a dependent kingdom by greatful conquerors," writes Cunningham. But the prize they got by playing treachery and getting their own countrymen slaughtered, was any thing but satisfactory. Lal Singh, thus for instance, had been appointed as Prime Minister of the Punjab. But he looked with jealousy at the prize which Gulab Singh had been able to wrest. The ink on the Treaty of Lahore had not thus dried, when he began to intrigue against the British.

Nor could Maharani Jindan be satisfied with the present arrangement. She had not been very anxious to continue the stay of the British forces at Lahore beyond the date stipulated in the Treaty of Lahore for their withdrawal. She was, therefore not consulted when the Treaty of Bhairowal was signed. After the signing of the treaty, a strict watch was kept upon her movements. And although she might not have actually taken a part in some conspiracy against the British, their developing hold on her country was hardly a thing she could like.

IV. THE BRITISH

After the First Anglo Sikh War, no effort had been made by Hardinge to annex the Punjab. Appreciating his policy, thus wrote Sir Robert Peel, the British Prime Minister, to him: "It is ten times more gratifying to the public mind than the annexation of the whole of the Punjab would have been.

"...They consider that the annexation of the Punjab would have been a source of weakness and not of strength, that it would have extended our frontier at the greatest distance from our resources and on the weakest points, that you would have been with reference to Afghanistan and all the bordering countries in a much worse position than you were in September last.

"These are Indian considerations; there are higher considerations still nearer home,....There is not a country in Europe or America.....that does not admire the single proof of bravery and military skill ten times the more....because it has been followed by dignified forbearance and moderation in the hour of strength."[64]

But by the time Dalhousie succeeded Hardinge in India, the situation had changed. The British studied the Punjab more closely, and they were convinced that the annexation of the Punjab was after all not a liability. It was a paying proposition. It would not be a source of weakness but that of strength. The hardy and robust Sikhs if recruited into the British forces and trained under the European methods, could bring victories to the British in any part of the world. And moreover, the Punjab, organising its resources efficiently, was a surplus State, and not deficit one.

Thus writes Dr. Ganda Singh: "The cotton of the Punjab was one of the chief attractions to the British who foresaw in the Land of five rivers favourable market for the consumption of their goods. While Amritsar offered the prospects of an enterepot for the Punjab and the hill territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Multan and Peshawar promised to become advanced depots for British trade in Afghanistan and in regions beyond the Oxus.

"The Punjab also offered vast opportunities of employment for a large number of British civilians and political with handsome salaries, allowances, furloughs and pensions. It also offered facilities of extensive cantonments and mountainous training-grounds for the British troops."[65] No wonder, therefore the annexationists among the British became more vocal. Dalhousie himself being one of them.

"The fact was that Lord Dalhousie's arrival initiated a change in the whole policy and methods of the supreme Government. Able, energetic, resolute, and entirely self-confident, he was a born autocrat; to whom it seemed obvious that the extension of the British rule was necessarily for the benefit of the ruled;......"[66] He was perfectly convinced that it was better to annex the country and be its master, than use it only as a buffer State against Afghanistan, and to stave off invasions from the north-east. He was also convinced of the possibility of training the Sikhs, which had been considered difficult in the time of Hardinge.

After his arrival in India, a policy of ruthless extermination of the Sikhs, rather than of pacifying them was started. All key positions one after another, were given over to the English.

The more honest and less of imperialistic spirit among the British, too had an excuse for annexation. They always considered themselves to be a superior civilization, and as Lawrence wrote: "The arrival of British functionaries in this remote and hitherto neglected portion of the Empire may be considered its salvation" The annexation of the Punjab could, therefore be a social job, done less from any selfish motive and more from a desire to develop the backward country. Little did, however they understand the national spirit for independence and self-rule and an apathy for the 'white man's burden,' in the country they desired to annex.

Maharani Jindan was suspected of having intrigued against the British at Lahore. No trial was held, and no charges were communicated to her, but she was retired to her country palace of Sheikhopur. Even if the Rani had intrigued at Lahore, thus writes Evens Bell, "in her compulsory retirement at the country place of Sheikhopur, her evil influence was almost extinguished; and in May 1848, one of the most mischievous plots carried on in her name having been exposed and defeated, and the chief conspirators publicly executed, she would have been powerless, if left to her own devices."[67] But not being satisfied, from Sheikhopur she was sent in exile to Benaras in the most humiliating condition. By the Treaty of Bhairowal, she was to get an annuity of Rs. 1½ lakh. On her removal to Sheikhopur, the a annuity was reduced in August 1847 to Rs. 48,000, and when she was sent in exile to Benaras, it was further reduced to a mere sum of Rs. 12,000. Besides, she was dispossessed of much of her jewellery. Number of attendants upon her was considerably reduced and a strict watch was kept upon her movements.

The effect of such harsh treatment towards the widow of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was instantaneous. The Resident himself wrote: "The reports from Raja Sher Singh's camp are, that the Khalsa soldierly, on hearing of the removal of the Maharanee were much disturbed."[68] This was looked upon by all, writes Bell "as a national insult, and as a preliminary step to the dethronment of her son, and the destruction of the State."[69]

Even Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan was moved by such a treatment meted out to Jindan, and he remarked that "such a treatment is objectionable to all creeds, and both high and low prefer death."[70]

The child Maharaja Dalip Singh had been betrothed to the daughter of Sardar Chuttar Singh, the Nazim of Hazara District. When he heard of the treatment meted out to Jindan, and when rumours got afloat regarding the intentions of the British, the mind of Chuttur Singh was naturally exercised. In order to apply a test whether the British were sincere in their intentions or were bent upon annexing the Punjab, he wrote to his son Sher Singh to go to the Resident forthwith and ask him to fix a date for Dalip Singh's marriage. Sher Singh met Lieutenant Edwards in this connection, and Edwards advised the Resident that since rumours regarding the British intention to annex the Punjab had gone abroad, "it would, I think, be a wise and timely measure to give such public assurance of British good faith, and intention to adhere to the Treaty, as would be involved in authoritative preparations for providing the young Maharaja with a Queen."[71]

But the Resident returned only a very stiff official reply to this application, which just naturally, strengthened the doubts in the minds of the Sardars yet further.

Just this time, Chuttur Singh himself fill into very strait circumstances. The Multan outbreak which immediately led to the clash, had occurred by this time. Captain Abbot, one of the Assistants of the Resident, had been appointed to advise and aid Chuttur Singh in his administration of the Hazara District. When an outbreak took place at Multan Captain Abbott somehow got himself convinced that Chuttur Singh himself was at the head of a conspiracy to march on Lahore, and from that time, he removed his residence about 35 miles from that of the Sardar.

Regarding Captain Abbot, Sir Henry Lawrence had remarked sometime back to the Governor-General: "Captain Abbott is an excellent officer; but he is too apt to take gloomy views of a question."[72] And here too, as the Resident latter wrote, Abbott's constant suspicion "seems to have, not unnaturally, estranged that chief (Chuttur Singh) from him." Although before this, remarks Evens Bell, "Nothing, whatever appears to have proved that "Sardar" Chuttur

Singh promoted or approved the misconduct of the evil-disposed among the Sikh troops."[73]

Yet being, convinced of Chuttur Singh's conspiracy, Abbott not only removed his residence at a distance, but he also began to rouse the armed Mahommedan peasantry of Hazara, who could hardly love to be ruled by a Sikh, against the Nazim. The peasantry thus incited, revolted and surrounded Harripur, where Chuttur Singh resided. Chuttur Singh had no option but to defend himself, and he ordered Col. Canora, an American officer in his service, to take a particular position for defence. But he too had fallen under Captain Abbott's influence, and not only he refused to comply with the order of the Sardar, loading two of his guns, one in each of his hands, he rather declared that he would shoot the first man who came near him. On this, two companies of Sikh infantry were sent against him, and he was shot down, after one or two of the Sikh soldiers themselves had been shot by him.

Abbott in his letter to the Resident, called this a cold blooded murder, but the Resident wrote in reply: "I cannot at all agree with you as to the character you assign to this transaction.....Taking the worst possible view of the case, I now not how you can characterise it as a cold-blooded murder."[74]

The shot had, however been fired. If Chuttur Singh had planned no revolt, he was goaded into one. He had been offered no explanations, and he considered Abbott's attitude to be the attitude of the British government towards him.

"The insurrection in Hazara was, infact, originally an insurrection of the Mohammedan peasantry, with the object of exterminating the Sikh troops and Governor, instigated and promoted by a British officer."[75]

Thus when Chuttur Singh was committed beyond possibility of retreat, his son Sher Singh had no option but to join him. Payne writes: "Sher Singh, with the whole of the Sikh contingent, went over to the side of Mulraj...If any doubt yet remained as to the real significance of the Multan outbreak, it was effectually dispelled."[76] Payne means to prove that Sher Singh had some conspiracy with Mulraj before the outbreak of Multan occurred. But this is wrong. The Multan outbreak

had occurred in the beginning of March 1848, but as late as on 23rd September, the resident himself wrote that "Raja Sher Singh's conduct has been very extraordinary, and is almost in explicable."[77] And Edwards, an Assistant to the Resident, wrote that when Sher Singh was sent to suppress Multan rebellion, he worked with the best intentions. And latter when Sher Singh wanted to go over to Mulraj, the latter rather distrusted him as an agent of the British, and Sher Singh had to become leader of a new rebellion.

The Multan outbreak

The immediate cause of the Second Anglo-Sikh war was, however the outbreak at Multan. Dewan Sawan Mal the Governor of Multan died, and when his own son Mulraj succeeded him, a succession fee of Rs. 30 lakh was demanded from him, which he having refused, troops under Bhagwan Singh, the brother of Raja Lal Singh, were sent in 1841 to realise the sum. The troops were defeated, but still the district of Jhang was wrested from him and given over to Bhagwan Singh. Not satisfied, an increase in revenue from Multan, payment of arrears and the rendering of old accounts was proposed, hearing of which, Mulraj came to Lahore, and submitted his resignation to the acting Resident Sir John Lawrence, his brother Henry having gone on leave. John, however persuaded him to continue for another year, and promised to keep his resignation a profound secret from the Darbar."

Shortly after, however a violent change took place in the situation. On March 6, 1848, Frederick Currie reached Lahore as a new Resident, of whom thus writes Major Basu: "He was perhaps appointed to the Residency at Lahore to provoke the Sikhs to hostilities and thus hasten the annexation of Punjab." John had written to his brother Henry just before Currie's arrival, that the "Government has just written to me to do nothing about Multan till Currie comes," which means some change in the approach was contemplated.

This proved correct. John had persuaded Mulraj to continue, But Currie on his arrival, revived the question and accepting the resignation, sent Kahn Singh, accompanied by two British officers namely, P.A. Vans Agnew and Lt. W.A. Anderson to take charge from

Mulraj. According to J.C. Marshman, "Mulraj had always been regarded by the British authorities, and particularly by Mr. John Lawrence, as a fair specimen of an Asiatic ruler, and Mr. Agnew remarked on his arrival, that the quiet aspect of Multan had not belied the accounts which he had heard of its excellent order and arrangement."[78]

Kahn Singh and the two British officers reached Multan on April 18, and the new Governor was formally installed in the office in the Multan fort on 19th. But while returning from the fort to their camp, the British officers, whose presence infuriated some Sikh sepoys, were suddenly attacked at the gate of the fort and were severely wounded. They, however with the help of the men of Kahn Singh, were able to escape to a neighbouring mosque. This was a signal for outbreak. A party was sent to bring back Mulraj who had just galloped off the city, and was forced to lead the rebellion at the risk of his life. He joined the rebels, but despite his efforts to save the British, the rebels turned the guns of the fort on the mosque and shortly after, the two British officers were murdered.

Here was a welcome chance for the annexationists. Message had reached Lt. Edwards, officer-in-charge of Derajat, who with Gen. Cortland from Bannu and some loyal troops of the Nawab of Bhawalpur, marched against Mulraj, who was defeated in two pitched battles, after which he shut himself up in the fort.

Lt. Edwards sent an urgent call for additional troops and seige guns to the Resident, but Lord Gough, the Commander-in-Chief delayed the action studiedly, and sent a force only in August when the Multan outbreak had spread whole over the Punjab. The seige of the fort began on 5th. September. On 14th September, Sher Singh with whole of his Sikh contingent, having failed injoining hands with Mulraj, became leader of a new rebellion. Chuttur Singh, his father, raised a standard of revolt in Hazara, and thus was the Second Anglo-Sikh war supposed have started.

V. THE WAR

Sher Singh's offer to join hands with Mulraj having been refused, he set out from Multan on October 9, and proceeding northward with his

whole force along the right bank of the Chenab, early in November, he reached Ramnagar, where he entrenched himself waiting for the arrival of the Bannu troops. It was here that the opening action of this war took place.

On the British side, the grand army of the Punjab assembled at Ferozepur early in November 1848 and Lord Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief reached Lahore on the 13th, wherefrom he marched towards Ramnagar on the 16th. No declaration of war against the Punjab had so for been made by the British Government and even on 15th November Lord Gough did not know whether he had come in the Punjab to fight some a refractory chief who might have revolted against the Punjab Government, or to fight the Punjab Government it self. As he wrote on that date: "I do not know whether we are at peace or war, or who it is we are fighting for."[79]

With his 20,000 men and 100 guns, Lord Gough attacked Sher Singh's position at Ramnagar on 22nd. Both sides suffered but the attackers more heavily among their killed being Lieutenant-Colonel Have lock and Brigadier-General Cureton. The attack "served no useful purpose."[80]

On December 3, another indecisive engagement having been fought at Sadullapur, the Sikhs withdrew from the Chenab and took up a strong position at Rassul, on the banks of the the river Jhelum, which commanded a road along which Chuttur Singh was to come with his division.

The British forces also having crossed the Chenab, halted at Help, 15 miles from Rassul, where after waiting for five weeks in the vain hope that the fall of Multan would enable General Which soon to join him, he decided to attack the Sikh position before Chuttur Singh could effect a junction with his son.

The Battle of Chelianwala

The forces of the two sides met at Chelianwala on January 13, 1894. The battle started in the afternoon, and the fight continued till the end of the day, lasting for a little more than three hours. The loss on both the sides was tremendous, and each side claimed victory. But writes Nolan, "the advantages gained were altogether on the part of

the Sikhs." According to Lionel James Trotter, on the side of the British, "thirty-three officers, fifty-three sergeants or havildars five hundered and eleven common soldiers had fallen dead, a hundered men and four sergeants were missing, few of whom returned alive; while the wounded came up to ninety-four officers, one warrant officer, ninety sergeants or havildars, and fourteen hundered and sixty-six men of other ranks. Besides this fearful loss, unequalled in the record of Indian battles, four guns belonging to the troops of Huish and Christie, and five or six colours borne by the 24th foot, the 25th, 30th, 56th, native infantry, remaining in enemy's hands."[81]

"When the news of Chelianwala reached England, the nation was stricken with profound emotion. A long series of military successes had ill fitted it to hear with composure of British guns and British standards taken, of British cavalry flying before the enemy, and of a British army scarcely able by the most desperate exertions to snatch a victory from a wild Indian people. And the disaster was attributed very generally to the blunders of the Commander-in-Chief."[82]

Lord Dalhousie lost his confidence in Lord Gough, and thus write to Sir John Hobhouse on February 21: "If he again fights an incomplete action with terrible carnage as before, you must expect to hear of my taking a strong step; he shall not remain in command of that army in the field."[83]

The Battle of Gujarat

It was on 24th January that Chuttur Singh joined Sher Singh. On the British side, a royal salute announced the fall of Multan two days latter. There being heavy and continuous rain after Chelianwala, further operations were not resumed for some days. During the night of February 11, the Sikhs evacuated Rassul, and passing round the flank of the British army, they moved off eastwards, apparently to cross the Chenab and march on Lahore. General Whish had reached Ramnagar from Multan by this time; and learning of Sher Singh's movements, he sent Colonel Byrne with a brigade to prevent him from crossing the river at Wazirabad. Byrne was just in time before the Sikhs could reach Chenab, who finding the fords guarded withdrew to Gujarat. On 21st February, uniting with the division of Whish, Lord Gough marched the main army to give the Sikhs a battle.

"Reinforced by Chuttur Singh and 1,500 Afghans under the son of Dost Muhammad, Sher Singh was now at the head of 40,000 men with 60 guns. Lord Gough's force numbered only 25,000, but for the first time since the commencement of the Sikh war he was superior to his opponent in artillery, having at his disposal the powerful eighteen-pounders which had been brought up from Bombay to the siege of Multan."[84] And though the Sikh gunners fought "in quickness of fire surpassing, in truth of aim very nearly equalling, the world-famous artillerymen of Bengal and Bombay,"[85] they failed against the more numerous and heavier guns of their assailants.

The action began at 7-30 a.m. and at 1 p.m., the British were in complete possession of Sher Singh's camp, "while the cavalry on both flanks were in hot pursuit of the now utterly routed army of the Khalsa...The Sikhs made no attempt to rally; and at Rawalpindi, on March 12, Sher Singh and all that was left of his broken army came in and surrendered. Thirty-five chiefs laid down their swords at Gilbert's feet; and afterwards the Sikh soldiers, advancing one by one, flung each his arms on a heap in front of the general's tent."[86]

"I never saw," thus runs the subaltern's diary, "anything like the reluctance with which they seemed to part with their weapons. Many of them were fine grey-hired old fellows, with large flowing white beards, probably some of Ranjit Singh's veterans. One old fellow I noticed in particular: he stood for a long time looking wistfully at his arms and the pile before him, and evidently could not make up his mind to give them up. At last the officer on duty came up and touched him on the shoulder, and ordered him to move on; he then threw down his sword and matchlock with a crash, and turned away saying, with tears in his eyes, 'All my work is done now." Another writer thus says, the Sikh soldiers kissed their swords and laid them down with tears in eyes, exclaiming "Ajj Ranjit Singh mar gaya-Today is Ranjit Singh dead."[87]

"After they had deposited their weapons, they went away-goodness knows where probably without a farthing in their pockets to buy food with."[88]

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13

The Annexation

On March 29, 1849, a Darbar was held at Lahore by Sir Henry Elliot, the Foreign Secretary, under the orders of the Governor-General. "It was attended by the boy-Maharaja, seated, for the last time, on the throne of his ancestors, and all the Sikh chiefs then present in the capital, while the proceedings were watched by a vast concourse of spectators. Amidst a deep silence, the proclamation of the Annexation of the Punjab was read aloud in English, Persian, and Hindustani. In the equally deep silence which followed, a paper was then handed by Tej Singh to the Maharaja, containing the conditions on which he and his chiefs might assure themselves of generous treatment at the hands of their conquerors. The paper was immediately signed by Dalip Singh, after which Sir Henry Elliot rose and left the hall. As he did so the British flag was hoisted on the ramparts of the citadel, and the booming of guns announced that the kingdom of Lahore had ceased to exist."[1]

The child Maharaja was granted a pension of £ 50,000 a year, with a permission to reside anywhere in the British territory, except in Punjab. The last act of submission of the Maharaja was the surrender to the British Government of the Koh-i-Nur.

The proclamation of the Governor-General ran thus:

"The Sikh people and their chiefs have, on their part grossly and faithlessly violated the promises by which they were bound. Of their annual tribute no portion, whatever has at any time been paid and large loans advanced to them by the Government of India have never been paid. The control of the British Government to which they voluntarily submitted themselves, has been resisted by arms. Peace has been cast aside. British officers have been murdered when acting for the State; others engaged in a like employment have been thrown into captivity.

Finally, the whole of the State and the whole Sikh people, joined by many of the Sardars in the Punjab, who signed the treaties, and by a member of Regency itself, have risen in arms against us and have waged a fierce and bloody war for the proclaimed purpose of destroying the British and their power.....

"The government has no desire for conquest now, but it is bound in its duty to provide fully for its own security and to guard the interests of those committed to its charge." And for all this, the Governor-General "hereby proclaims, that the kingdom of the Punjab is at an end."[2]

Besides in the proclamation, the arguments forwarded by Dalhousie for the annexation of the Punjab, are available in several state documents, and ultimately he was convinced, as he asserted, that "there never will be peace in the Punjab as long as its people are allowed to retain the means and opportunity of making war. There never can be now any guarantee for the tranquility of India, until we shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people, and destroyed its power as an independent nation."[3]

Lord Dalhousie is supported by certain writers. Thus writes W.W. Hunter: "Lord Hardinge at the end of the first Punjab war in 1846, tried, as we have seen, an intermediate method of ruling the province by British officers for the benefit of the infant prince. This method had failed. It produced, what many had foreseen it would produce, a period of perpetual intrigue, ending in a general insurrection."[4] The only alternative, therefore was annexation.

Latif writes. "The British Government of India had throughout acted with the utmost forbearance and moderation in their relations with the Sikh Darbar, and the policy of the Governor-General had from the outset, been wholly unaggressive, and entirely free from any taint of greed or ambition.....But the sinking fortunes of the Sikhs prevented that noble policy from being appreciated, and every endeavour made to give it effect proved unavailing."[5]

But the annexation of the Punjab has not been universally applauded. Thus according to Duke of Argyll, "there is no need to defend it in point of right, and as little need now to support it in respect to policy."[6] Napier called Dalhousie 'the Lord of Cockpen,' and 'a

young Scotch lord, with no head for governing an Empire.'[7] "To offer any vindication of a measure which even the most prejudiced of Lord Dalhousie's opponents have not ventured to impugn," thus writes J.C. Marshman, "would be altogether redundant." Sir Henry Lawrence opposed annexation and even members of the British Cabinet in England swallowed it only with a pinch of salt.

It would be interesting, however to have a short critical review of the question to form our own view.

To start with, the attention of the reader may be drawn to one of the Articles of the Agreement of December 16, 1846, by which the British Government undertook "The maintenance of an administration, and protection of the Maharaja Dalip Singh during the minority of his Highness." And for this Governor-General was given supreme and plenary powers, and was at liberty to occupy with the British soldiers, as he might think fit any fort or any part of the country.

Further, as Hardinge declared on December 21, 1846, the Council of Regency, composed of the leading chiefs of the Punjab, would be under complete control of the Resident, who could at his will, introduce any change in it, dismiss a member and appoint another in his place. And in 1847, the Resident himself wrote; "On the whole the Darbar" (The Council of Regency) 'gives me as much support as I reasonably expect;....(they) refer most questions to me, and in words at least allow, more fully even than I wish, that they are only executive officers,—to do as they are bid."[8]

That the Lahore Darbar, or the Council of Regency, worked as completely sub-servient to the Resident even till atleast as late as February 1849, is proved in the following extracts from Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Lahore and the Akhbar-i-Multan, quoted in a paper published in the Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Vol. XXI, pp. 43-46.

"Diwan Mulraj and latter on, Sardar Chatar Singh and his sons....etc., who had taken up arms against the British in the Punjab, were looked down upon and declared as mufsids, or mischiefmakers; their houses were searched by the officials of the Darbar and their property confiscated to the State."[9]

"Food and fodder were regularly supplied by the servants of the Darbar to the British regiments moving from their cantonments into the Punjab for the suppression of the disturbances in the country."[10]

"The Lahore Darbar ordered Sardar Gulab Singh, son of the 'rebel' Sardar Chatar Singh, to convey personally to his father a copy of the Governor-General Lord Dalhousie's letter saying that if any harm came to the lives of the British officers in Peshawar and Hazara, it would be avenged with the blood of the sons of the Sardar, one of whom, the above Sardar Gulab Singh, was then in Lahore."[11]

"On the arrival of the British Commander-in-Chief at Lahore on November 13, 1848, Maharaja Daleep Singh and the chiefs of the Lahore Darbar received him with all the usual friendly formalities and presents, and fired a salute of 17 guns in his honour. In the course of conversation, Sir Hugh Gough told the Resident that their object was the protection and management (hifazt-o bandobast) of the kingdom of the Maharaja, in addition to the encouragement of his friends and supporters and the suppression of the rebels."[12]

"As desired by the Resident, the Lahore Darbar fired 12 guns to celebrate the victory of Multan....."[13]

Dalip Singh was thus a British ward, and the Punjab Government completely in the control of the Resident. Yet justifying the annexation, Dalhousie alleged that the Government of Lahore neither punished Mulraj "nor gave raparation for the offence," the questions arise, who controlled the Government of Lahore? And who was responsible for the suppression of the refractory chiefs? Clearly by the terms of the Treaty, it was the duty of the British and not that of their ward or anybodyelse to do the job. The Lahore Darbar was only to give its co-operation and that it did.

Then again. The Multan outbreak occured in April 1848, where as to suppress it the British troops reached there only in August, after the lapse of four months. The excuse forwarded by Lord Gough was that, it being hot weather, it would not be feasible to risk a large army in an action till after the rains. But this seems to be a lame excuse. Edward Lake wrote to Currie on August 14, 1848: "As for the weather, nothing can he more agreeable and pleasant than it is now. The nights are really quite cold and the day are not disagreeable."

Moreover, as Edwards addressed Major Hodson on May 24,1848, "Postpone a rebellion I was ever such a thing heard of in any Government?"

"It is difficult also," thus writes Sir William Hunter, "to refrain from censure of the inability to move which the Commander-in-Chief betrayed during that period, in spite of the two great camps of nine thousand men apiece at Lahore and Ferozepur—camps standing in readiness to march at a day's notice."[14]

The truth seems to be that the Government of India was determined to let the small rebellion in Multan, spread whole over the Punjab, then declare it to be the rebellion of the Punjab and the Lahore Darbar against the British, throw a powerful conquering army, and annex the State to the British empire in India. Or as S.S. Thorburn writes: "The Government of India had decided to the Punjab abscess come to a head, and when ripe to lance it freely in the coming cold weather."[15]

In the meanwhile, no stone seems to have been left un-turned, to incite rebellions and uprisings in the country. Maharani Jindan was forced into exile in humiliating conditions, Chuttur Singh's proposal for the marriage of Dalip Singh was rejected, and rather such a situation was created at Hazara, thanks to the efforts of Captain Abbot, that Chuttur Singh had no alternative but to revolt. Sher Singh who had been so honest and loyal in his dealings with the British, was likewise goaded into joining hands with Chuttur Singh, his father.[16] And then the Governor-General declared in his proclamation so innocently that, "the whole of the State and the whole Sikh people, joined by many of the Sardars in the Punjab, who signed the treaties, and by a member of the Regency it self, have waged a fierce and bloody war for the proclaimed purpose of destroying the British and their power."

Yet the truth is, that out of the 16 Sardars who signed the treaties, only five joined the rebellion. Out of the eight members of the Council of Regency, six remained faithful, one was suspected, and only one, namely Sher Singh, joined the rebellion, and that when the British themselves had left him with no alternative but this.

Nor did "the whole of the State and the whole Sikh people," and the army of the State take field against the British. It was only a small

fraction of the army in the southeastern and northwestern part of the Punjab, which deserted. The troops under the command of Sihekh Imam-ud-din, Sardar Jhanda Singh, Colonel Bhup Singh, General Cortland, Sardar Fateh Singh, Missar Sahib Dyal, Diwan Jawahar Mal, Colonel Bahadur Singh, Colonel Budh Singh, General Sultan Mahmud, Babu Pandey and Colonel Nur-ud-din, etc. rather remained obedient even till the end, under the orders of the Lahore Darbar. And in addition to this, writes Evens Bell, "at least 20,000 subjects of the Lahore State enrolled in its service, fought on the side of the Government, and assisted in suppressing the rebellion."

And the outbreak of Multan itself seems to have been only accidental and unpremeditated. At the time Mulraj had not been enjoying a good health. He was without children and unhappy and even unpopular with his own army. The resident himself says of him, just before the out break, Mulraj had "only five or six field guns,"[17] and had even "discharged almost all his government."[18] And even Dalhousie himself could not help remarking once that "the first outbreak was unpremeditated, and, in a manner, accidental."[19]

Moreover, prior to handing over the charge, Mulraj had disbanded his troops thus causing misery to many a family, for which according to those thus thrown into unemployment, the British themselves were responsible. The man who attacked the British officers was himself most probably brooding over his probable dismissal, after the new Governor had taken over the charge, and his attack, therefore, was an expression only of his personal discontentment, which latter developed into a general outbreak, forcing Mulraj into it as well, at the risk of his life.

And yet more. Diwan Mulraj was not a Sikh. His father Sawan Mal and he himself, had governed Multan for over thirty years, repeatedly defying the Lahore power even before the British. And even if Mulraj did so once again, his action was nothing new, and he should have been suppressed as hitherto he and his father had been. And this should have been done by the British themselves who were the legal guardians and protectors of Dalip Singh and his territories.

It is clear thus from the above arguments, the outbreaks in the Punjab were not of general order, only a few of the Sardars revolted, great many of them and great majority of the soldiers, remained loyal

to the British even till the end of the campaign. It is fallacious, therefore to assert that whole of the State, the Sikhs and the Sardars revolted against the British. Thus did Herbert Edwards declare openly to Major Hodson, the Political Assistant of the British Resident, in his letter of May 24, 1848:

"You express a hope in your letter that the British Government will act for itself, and not prop up a fallen dynasty. In other words, hope we shall seize the opportunity to annex the Punjab. In this I cannot agree with you, for I think, for all that has yet happened, it would be both unjust and inexpedient. The treaty we made with the Sikh Government and people cannot be forfeited by the treachery of a Gorkha Regiment in Multan, the rebellion of a discharged Darbar or the treasonable intrigues of the queen-mother, who has no connection with the government of her son."

On 18th November, 1848, a Proclamation was issued, and confirmed by Lord Dalhousie on December 14; and the declaration made in this proclamation was confirmed in another proclamation issued on February 5, 1849, which clearly laid down that, the troops entering into the Punjab under Lord Gough, were not doing so "as an enemy to the constituted government." Still, however he had already written to the Resident on October 3, 1848: "The Governor-General considers the State of Lahore to be, to all intents and purposes, directly at war with the British Government."[20] Nothing short of a clear treachery and deception, hardly befitting a man of that stature and an empire so great.

Further in January 1849, the Governor-General wrote to Amir Dost Mohammad of Afghanistan, "the Province of Peshawar is a portion of the territories of Maharaja Dalip Singh, and by the provisions of treaty, is subject, during the minority of his Highness, to the control and direction of the British Government." Thus question naturally arises if the Province of Peshawar was under the control and direction of the British Government, was not the same position occupied by the Province of Multan as well? If it was the duty of the British to protect Dalip Singh against any attack at Peshawar, it was their duty to protect him against an outbreak at Multan as well.

The proclamation runs: "Of their annual tribute no portion, whatever has at any time been paid and large loans advanced to them

by the Government of India have never been paid." Yet we learn that the Darbar paid gold to the value of Rs. 13,56,837 on February 23, 1848, and the Resident recorded with satisfaction: "They have thus, by economy and care, been able to make good four months pay of the Irregular Cavalry, to discharge the whole of the arrears of the men who have been pensioned and disbanded, to meet their current expenses, and have still, at this moment, full eight lakh rupees in the different treasuries to meet the public exigencies."[21]

Moreover, we know that there was a lot of financial loss to the Lahore Darbar, due to some fiscal changes introduced in the Punjab, by the Resident with the consent of the Governor-General himself, which latter they themselves agreed, were mis-placed so far as the Punjab was concerned. In such circumstances, if at all some loan was not paid, or its payment was delayed, it could be considered neither evasion nor violation of any clause of the treaty.

Confusion in the mind of the Governor-General is manifest. In the proclamation, at one place he says that "the Sikhs" have revolted, at another place, "the Sikh people," then "The Sikh nation," "The Government" and the "State of Lahore," as if all these are convertible terms. And even if the entire mass of the Sikhs revolted, the Sikhs constituted only a part of the total population of the Punjab.

When Nepoleon in Europe, was defeated by England and her allies, France itself was not annexed to any European country. Why did different moral principles apply to the Punjab? In the Anglo-Nepalese Wars, Nepal war finally defeated in 1816, and a British Resident was imposed upon that country, and from that time, the system continued. Why could not the same happen in the Punjab? In fact under reformed government of Dalip Singh, the Punjab should have co-operated with the British as willingly as Patiala, Nabha and Jind did. If such a system could succeed in these Sikh states, why could it not succeed in the Punjab?

In fact, as early as on October 20, 1843, Lord Ellenborough had written to Wellington: "The time cannot be very distant when the Punjab will fall into our arrangement."[22] The greedy eyes of the British had been falling upon the State even during Ranjit Singh's time. But he by his diplomacy, was able to keep them at an arm's length, whereas

his successors weak in talent, or unfavoured by destiny, failed to do so and succumed to the British treacherous designs.

Commenting on Lord Dalhousie's annexation of the Punjab, thus writes Ludlow:

"Fancy, if you can, a widow lady with the police. The police knock them on the head; walk into the house, and kindly volunteer to protect the mistress against any violence on their part. A quarrel again breaks out, the truncheons are again successful, and the inspector now politely informs the lady that her house and the estate on which it stands are no longer her own, but will be retained in fee simply by the police; that on turning out she will receive an annuity equal to about one and six pence in a pound of her rental, and that she must hand over for the use of the Chief Commissioner her best diamond necklace."[23]

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3. See Arnold, 'Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration,' i. pp. 205-19, ed. 1862.
4. 'The Marquess of Dalhousie,' p. 79. (a) Latif, pp. 572-73.
5. Latif, ii, pp. 571-72.
6. India under Dalhousie and Canning, p. 4.
7. See Gough, p. 268.
8. Punjab Papers, 1849, p. 32.
9. Akh. Lahore, Oct., 1-3, 4-9, 1848.
10. Bkh. Lahore, Oct., 21-24, 1848.
11. *Ibid.*, Nov. 1848.
12. Akh., Nov. 13, 1848.
13. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1849.
14. 'Marquess of Dalhousie,' p. 74.
15. Punjab in Peace and War, (London, 1904) p. 101; See also Trotter, 'The History of the British Empire in India, i, p. 134.
16. See Chapter; The causes of the Second Sikh War.
17. Punjab Papers, 1849, p. 133.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 371.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 584.
20. Punjab, Papers, 1849, p. 591.
21. *Ibid.*, 1849, pp. 110-11.
22. Colchester, 'The Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, (London, 1874) pp. 339-400.
23. 'British India,' ii. p. 166.

14

Maharaja Dalip Singh

Before proceeding ahead, it would he interesting to have a short account of Maharaja Dalip Singh, ând the British Dealings with him, after his kingdom was annexed to the British empire.

Of the seven sons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh,[1] Dalip Singh was the youngest. Born on February 5, 1837, he was only two years, four months and twenty-two days old, when his father, the Lion of the Punjab died. We have studied how and in what circumstances Dalip Singh came to power in the Punjab, and how Maharani Jindan, his mother, conducted the State affairs, he being yet minor. We have also studied how the British occupied the Punjab and signed a treaty with Dalip Singh promising him and his successors a good pension.

The Maharaja was in the eleventh year of his age, when he was deprived of his ancestral kingdom. Dr. Sir John Login, a man of kindly disposition and loving manners was appointed to take charge of the Maharaja. The first birthday of Dalip Singh after the annexation of his kingdom, fell on September 4, 1849, that is, he was now eleven, and entering his 12th year. Dr. Login thus wrote to his wife in the connection: "Everything was done that was in my power, to give the anniversary due honour, so that he should feel the difference in his position as little as possible, and not contrast unpleasantly with the last, when he was a reigning king. No doubt, in spite of all, he did see and feel a great difference, poor little man! but nevertheless he thoroughly enjoyed himself and was as delighted with the fireworks as any boy of his age could he. Luckily the evening was fine, though the deluge of rain in the morning was dreadful, and upset all my grand arrangements

"I had the great pleasure of presenting to the Maharaja, on the morning of his birthday, a lakh of rupees" worth of his own jewels from the Toshakhana which I had been empowered by Government to select and present to him.

"He appeared, therefore dressed most splendidly; wearing, besides other jewels, the diamond aigrette and star I had selected. When I congratulated him on his appearance, he innocently remarked, that on the last birthday he had worn the Koh-i-noor on his arm."[2]

This was indeed a poor compensation to the Maharaja for what he had lost? If one walked through his Toshakhana, which had fallen into the British hands, that itself was a wonder. The vast quantities of gold and silver, the jewels not to be valued, so many and so rich the Koh-i-noor,[3] far beyond what one could imagine; and perhaps above all the immense collection of magnificent Kashmeri shawls, rooms full of them, laid out on shelves, and heaped up in bales.

After Dr. Login took his charge, the little Maharaja seems immediately to have got attached to him, looking on him as his "Ma—Bap," and not even going out to ride in the morning, or drive in the evening, unless Login would go with him.

Shortly after this, the young Maharaja was removed from Lahore to Fattehgarh, the most elaborate precautions having been taken to prevent his abduction. Dr. Login, who was to draw a consolidated salary of 1,200 rupees a month, one-half to be paid by the British Government, and the other half to be defrayed from the annual income of the Maharaja, was issued strict instructions to guard the Maharaja against any intrigues on the part of his mother, Maharani Jindan, who was now residing under guard at Kathmandu, and who had refused to return to the British territories, but whose avowed intention was said to be to regain possession of her son.

At Fattehgarh, elaborate arrangements were made for the Maharaja, several bungalows and residences, belonging to various owners, each surrounded by its own compound, were purchased, and the Maharaja, Rani Duknu, the widow of Maharaja Sher Singh, who accompanied Dalip Singh thither, native gentlemen in attendence, and Dr. Login and other Europeans in attendance, all occupied separate houses, the mixture of European and Oriental arrangements at

"Fattehgarh Park" the name given to the Maharaja's small estate, looking curious.

Walter Guise, an Englishman, was appointed Maharaja's tutor, and every effort was made to give a good impression to the Maharaja, of Christian mode of living. As Dr. Login himself wrote in one of his letters to his wife: "I am anxious to give this young Maharaja...a favourable impression of us Christians, in our domestic state." And asking his wife to join him he added: "So you see, dearest, you have a mission to perform—to establish the character of your countrymen, and to acquire respect for them, of which they have little yet, I am afraid."[4] And again he wrote: "Lord Dalhousie is afraid to recommend a tutor that it might imply an interference with the boy's religious faith; I trust, however that God helping us, we shall be enabled, as "written epistles," to manifest the spirituality and benevolence of a Christian life, if we cannot otherwise preach to him. He is a strange little fellow, and shows an intelligence beyond his years Observing that Guise, Barlow, Tommy Scott, and I have morning and evening prayers together, he asked me to order his porohut (priest) to come to him also at a fixed hour daily to read in his holy book (the Granth). This I think indicates a devotional feeling, that may hereafter be directed aright,"[5] And no doubt, it was not long before that the Maharaja's feelings were directed aright.

The Maharaja was thoroughly surrounded by Christian influence and life, and played only with Christian children. No wonder, all this had its effect on his tender heart, and it was not long before he offered himself for conversion into Christianity.

Dalip Singh is himself said to have abandoned the idea of marrying the daughter of Chuttur Singh, to whom he had been betrothed. For sometime two beautiful daughters of the Raja of Coorg were considered for the purpose, but later the matter was left to Dalip Singh himself to do as he would.

Regarding the Maharaja's sentiments towards his mother, thus wrote Dr. Login on April 4, 1850: "As far as I can judge, not the least desire exists on the part of the Maharaja to communicate with his mother. From all the information I could collect at Lahore from those likely to know his feelings, he appeared to dislike any reference being

made to the Rani, and never mentioned her name, though he spoke readily of his uncle Jawahir Singh, and his affection for him; but as I was anxious to ascertain his sentiments on this point myself for my own guidance, I took a favourable opportunity to ask him regarding it. He told me he had heard nothing of her since he left Lahore, and that she had only disgraced him, *Serif hamka budnam deah.* and on being asked if she had not been kind to him, he said she used to strike him daily."

In November, 1850, Dr. Login being away from Fattehgarh, the Maharaja suddenly announced his intention of embracing Christianity. Although the denial of Dr. Login and his associates that nothing was done to preach Christianity upon him could not be doubted. There is no doubt that Login was anxious to effect him favourably towards Christianity through his own actions and through Christian atmosphere around the Maharaja. This ultimately had a better effect than any direct preaching could be expected to have. No haste was, however shown in admitting the Maharaja to Christian faith after his declaration so that the people might be convinced that it was Dalip Singh's own independent decision, in which he might get yet more matured. On August 2, 1851, Dalhousie addressed the Maharaja thus: "I rejoice to learn that your Highness remains firm in your desire to be instructed in the doctrine of the Bible, and that you have resolved to embrace a faith, whose teaching, if duly practised by the help of God, will tend to increase your happiness in this life, and will secure it in another that is to come." The Maharaja was put under a probation of two years, during which he attended the church regularly. Bible was read to him and Christian influence upon him strengthened. During this period he visited Delhi, Agra, Hardwar and Mussoorie, etc., wherever, he went, the Christian surroundings went with him.

On 8th March, 1853, the Maharaja was admitted into the Christian Church by baptism, and took the vows upon his in a most solemn and impressive manner. The ceremony took place in his private dwelling house, at Fattehgarh, in the presence of about 25 of the European residents of the station, and nearly an equal number of the Maharaja's principal Indian servants. Dalhousie addressing Dr. Login on March 13, 1853, remarked, "I regard it as a very remarkable event in history, and in every way gratifying."

After some hesitations, permission was granted to Dalip Singh to visit England. And on the 19th April, 1854, before Dalip Singh and his party sailed for England the Maharaja received from Dalhousie a copy of Bible and a note which read—

My Dear Maharaja,

Before you Quit India, I have been desirous of offering you a parting gift, which in future years might sometimes remind you of me.

Since that day, when the course of public events placed you a little boy in my hands, I have regarded you in some sort as my son. I, therefore ask you, before we part, to accept from me the volume which I should offer to my own child, as the best of all gifts, since in it alone is to be found the secret of real happiness either in this world or in that which is to come.

"I bid you farewell, my dear Maharaja, and beg you to believe me always.

With sincere regard,
Your Highness's faithful friend"

In England

Visiting Egyption Pyramids, Cairo, the American Mission Schools in the city and Alexandria, etc., the Maharaja sailed ahead. While still in Indian waters, at Aden and elsewhere, regular salute ordered by the Governor-General was given the Maharaja, on the vessel which conveyed him dropping anchor; but there was some uncertainty in Dalip Singh's mind as to the exact amount of recognition to be awarded him by the Home Government When at Malta, therefore, the guns were fired, he quietly seemed to be counting the number, "and when the total reached twenty, and there could be no doubt that a full "royal salute" of twenty-one guns was intended, he could no longer repress the look of satisfaction which appeared on his countenance."[6]

When Dalip Singh reached England, the Court of Directors, as a mark of respect, provided him with a residence at their own expense, and regarding this thus did Dalhousie address Dr. Login: "you have a tidy little bit of business in getting a house out of the Court, and I

advise you to rest content with that, and not seek for more "marks of consideration, of they may be anxious for his return to Fattehghur."[7]

While in India, Dalip Singh had adopted a semi-European style of dress, which consisted of the Sikh, embroidered *Kurta,* or Kashmeri tunic, and over that a single-breast velvet coat, richly embroidered in gold; English trousers, with a stripe of gold embroidery down the seams. In his Sikh turban was a jewelled aigrette, and three rows of large pearls were a round his neck; frequently: he had on other jewels besides these, but he was never without the pearl necklace, and a pair of large emerald-and-pearl rings. In England he wore a completely national costume, but after sometime, fully adopted English dress for all occasions.[8]

Soon after the Maharaja's arrival in England, the Queen and the Prince consort gave him a special audience. The Queen being charmed with his manners and appearance, gave orders for a full-length portrait of the Maharaja to be painted by Winchester, for which he gave sittings at Buckingham Palace, twice a week, in which the Queen and Prince Albert were always present. In one of the settings, unknown to Dalip Singh, the Queen brought in Koh-i-noor, and before the astonishing Maharaja realized what was passing, the celebrated jewel was in his hand, and the Queen enquired if he could recognize it and whether he thought it improved. It was a nervous quarter of an hour for Lady Login who was present there. The purpose had been that the Queen wanted the jewel to be handed over to her by the Maharaja by his own hands so that she could bring peace to her conscience within. With an emotion and eagerness the Maharaja moved to the window, and after examining it minutely and making remarks, on its greater brilliancy and diminished size, with a low obeisance, presented the jewel to Her expressing gracefully a few words of pleasure which it afforded him to have the opportunity of himself presenting it to Her.

The Maharaja accompanied the Queen once to see the Prorogation of Parliament. His rank was determined to be the same as that of an European prince, and was authorised to take precedence next after the Royal family. The Queen was also pleased to confer the honour of Knighthood on Login. During his visit to Osborne, the Maharaja was treated again with kindness by the Queen and the Prince, the Princesses treating him as one of themselves. Here the Maharaja

took several photographs with the help of Prince consort in one of which he is seen with the young Princesses dressed in Maharaja's Indian costumes. This also established a correspondence between him and the princesses. Later, the Queen also ordered a best of the Maharaja to be executed by Baron Marochetti.

The Maharaja in the mean while, continued his education. He developed an admiration for Shakespeare, besides his knowledge of English, he learnt German, but Italian was his favourite European language. He also visited Italy in Rome, the Maharaja was given due honour by Pope. As a special compliment to him, the Pope ordered the sculpture galleries of the Vatican to be lighted up with *flambeaux* for his inspection.

As the time passed, the Maharaja now got anxious to know what arrangment was contemplated for his future. He had a legal claim upon the accumulations as may have taken place during his minority, by lapses of pensions from the allowance of "not less than four lakhs, and not more than five lakhs, per annum," to which he and his family and servants were entitled by the treaty. Soon, however he was given to understand that such lapses could not be claimed by him. Dalip Singh, however, had an under faith in the British sense of justice. On December 9, 1856, he wrote to the court of Directors, in which, without making a reference to the treaty he requested 'that such provision be assigned to me as may appear liberal."

In reply, the court expressed satisfaction for the excellent disposition manifested by him during his stay in England, and promised to refer the question to Government of India and make provision according to the treaty, in connection to which, he would be addressed again. This reply was received by the Maharaja in February 1857, but he having received no further intimation even by May, was going to address the court again, when the Mutiny broke out in India. He therefore, decided to wait until the intelligence was received of the recapture of Delhi. The Maharaja does not seem to have developed any sympathy for the mutineers in India, nor any ambition for the re-capture of his position, during this time. His residence at Fattehgarh, rather, had been sacked and burnt by the mutineers, and his faithful servants murdered.

Having come of age, the Maharaja applied for emancipation from guardianship, but not till December 29, 1857 when he had exceeded by three years, the age at which Hindu princes attained their legal majority, did the court permit him to assume management of his own affairs. The change having taken place in India, Dalhousie being replaced by Lord Canning, the Maharaja lost the benefit of sympathies of a man, who after depriving him of his kingdom, was considerate in making provision for his future.

In the meanwhile, the Maharaja grew anxious to meet his mother. He, therefore sailed to India authorising Dr. Login to carry on efforts to settle his affairs with the government. In India, as he wrote in February, 1861, he was given a "salute of twenty-one guns...an escort of two *sowars* and a guard of one *paharah* of four Sepoys, and a Naick."[9]

About the time of the Maharaja's visit to India, several Sikh Regiments arrived from China. Hearing of their former ruler's arrival, they besieged his hotel, and were very demonstrative to welcome him. This made Lord Canning anxious who urged the Maharaja to leave for England, immediately alongwith his mother. Reaching England, the Maharaja's mother was determined not to resideseparately from her son any longer but seeing that under his mother's influence, he may not lapse into the old habits of his faith, his Christian friends prevailed ultimately upon him to get her separate residence, till she died in August 1863. Two months after this event he had to mourn the loss of one whom he had given the respect of his father. Dr. Login died on October 18, 1863. In the meanwhile, the Maharaja lost yet another friend,—Prince Consort, with whose efforts Dalip Singh appeared in the very first list of the recipients as Knight Grand Cross of the order, after the new order of the Star of India had been founded.

Soon the Maharaja had to embark to convey his mother's remains to India. Before leaving England, he told Lady Login that he dreaded marriage with worldly woman, and had, therefore decided to visit the Missionary School at Cairo on his way out, and to ask the missionaries if they could help him. Maharani Jindan's remains were landed at Bombay, where arrangements were made for her funeral rites, and the ashes were scattered on the sacred waters of the Narbda.[10]

While at Bombay, the Maharaja announced his engagement, and soon after a note appeared in Times of India regarding a marriage in Egypt, which said: "The marriage of the Maharaja Dalip Singh took place at the British consulate, Alexandria, on the 7th June, in the presence of a very few witnesses. The young lady who has now become the Maharani is the daughter of un European merchant here. Her mother is an Abyssinian. She is between fifteen and sixteen years of age, of a slight but graceful figure, interesting rather than handsome, not tall, and in complexion lighter than her husband. She is a Christian, and was educated in the American Presbyterian Mission School at Cairo; and it was during a chance visit there, while on his way out to India, that the Prince saw his future bride, who was engaged as instructress in the School." Name of the bride was Bamba Muller. Soon after, the couple reached England and retired for a time, into peaceful married life.

In the meanwhile, the efforts to reach a financial settlement with the British Government continued; But by this time there had developed fundamental differences on the interpretation that was to be given to the treaty the British had signed at the time of the annexation of the Punjab. A few extracts from the Maharaja's book, which he published with the help of his solicitor in June, 1884, in this connection, will explain the case.

The 4th Article of the Treaty reads: "His Highness Dalip Singh shall receive from the Honourable East India Company, for the support of himself, his relatives and the servants of the State, a pension not less than four, and not exceeding five lakhs of Company's rupees per annum." The 5th Article says: ".....he shall continue to receive, during his life, such portion of the above-named pension as may be allowed to himself personally, provided he shall remain obedient to the British Government...."

"The personal claim of the Maharaja," says the Minute of the Council,[11] "is here limited to the receipt, for his life, of his personal stipend; and the amount to be allotted to him was left entirely to the Government of India."

"During the first years of the Maharaja's minority the annual sum allotted for his personal allowance was 120,000 rupees per annum which was increased to 150,000 per annum at his attaining the age of

eighteen. The Indian Government recommended that at the age of 21, he should be allotted 25,000 (2½ lakh rupees), which together with the sum allotted to other recipients under 4th Article, would exceed the amount four lakhs."

The Maharaja's claim that the other recipients of the allowance should be paid through him and that in case of the decease of any one of them or some other lapses, the benefit of the allowances, as under the 4th Article, should fall to him as head of the family, was not accepted. Such lapses, according to British interpretation, were to fall to them.

Secondly, the difference between the sums actually allotted to the Maharaja and his relatives, etc. and the sum promised in the 4th Article, had now reached the figure between £ 150,000 and £ 200,000. The Maharaja claimed this as payable to him. But according to the British Government, under 5th Article, it was not so, and the Government could allow him an allotment as they themselves felt due.

Several other claims were forwarded by the Maharaja such as the one upon his private ancestral property which Ranjit Singh possessed in 1800, before he attained sovereignty of the Punjab, the annual value of which was Rs. 20,499, and which had not in any way been touched upon by the treaty. Dalip Singh valued his property pillaged at Fattehgarh at Rs. 198,182, while the Government offered him for this a compensation only of £ 3,000, which he considered as insulting.[12]

The Maharaja offered to abide by the arbitration of any three English statesmen to be named by the Queen if they were unconnected with the India Office. But nothing came out of it. Ultimately when the climax was reached, and it was no longer possible for him to support his rank in England, with the means at his disposal, he found himself "done with England and her hypocrisies." And embarked with his whole family for India. Before leaving England, he addressed the following letter to his countrymen:

My dear Countrymen

I never had an intention to come and reside in India, but due to Gods' will, dispute my desire otherwise. I am coming to my country.

Dear Brothers! I honestly beg your forgiveness for having left

the Sikh religion and adopted the Christianity because when I adopted Christianity. I was very young, and had no understanding, whatsoever. It is my heartfelt desire that I should come to Punjab, but restrictions are placed against my coming to Punjab. Therefore, I am writing this letter to my countrymen.

London March 25, 1886.

I am

Your own blood and flesh,

Dalip Singh

After this he left for India, but the moment he entered the Indian waters, he was arrested at Aden, by orders of Lord Dufferin. The Maharani returned atonce with the family to England, while the Maharaja, furious at this insult, refused to accept for himself a pension from the British Government any longer, and withdrew to the continent of Europe.

The Maharani died in the following year, leaving three sons and three daughters, to be provided for by the British Government. The four younger children were placed under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Oliphant, at Brighton, while the eldest son, Prince Victor, godson of the Queen, entered Her Majesty's service, holding a commission in the Royal Dragoons, and being allowed £ 2,000 a year by the India Office. Prince Frederick, godson of the Emperor of Germany, who graduated at Cambridge, was also provided for.

The Maharaja reached France,[13] where with the help of the French Government, he tried to reach Pondicharry, the French colony in India, but failed. From here he moved to Germany and then to Russia from where he addressed a letter to Indian newspapers, which was published in October 1887, appealing to the Indians to contribute one pice per person a month, and to the Punjabi's to contribute one anna to help him, and that he would come to India with the help of the Russian forces. But neither in India nor in Russia could he get what he desired. He returned to France, where he married a French lady, and died on October 23, 1893, poor and destitute, the Maharaja of the Punjab. All his children died issueless, and thus was the symbol of the Sikh royalty destroyed, which the Lion of the Punjab had nurtured and fostered with so much labour and toil.

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1. They were: Kharak Singh, Sher Singh, Tara Singh, Multan Singh, Kashmira Singh, Peshora Singh and Dalip Singh.
2. Dr. Login to his wife, Citadel, Sep., 5th 1849.
3. A short account may here he given of the history of the celebrated jewel, which fell into the British hands and was passed on to the Queen of England. The origin of this peerless jewel is lost in the mists of antiquity. It had fallen into the hands of the early Turkish invaders of India, and from them it had passed to the Mughals. "My son Humayun, says Babur, "has won a jewel from the Raja, which is valued at half the daily expenses of the whole world." A century or two latter the Persian conqueror, Nadir Shah, seeing glitter in the turban of Babur's conquered descendant, exclaimed with rough and some what costly hunour, "we will be friends, let us change turbans in pledge of friendship," and the exchange of course took place. After Nadir Shah, it passed into the hands of Ahmed Shah, then down into the possession of Shah Shuja. We have already studied, how Ranjit Singh secured the jewel from Shah Shuja. It was placed in the Maharaja's Toshakhana, but he carried it alongwith himself, wherever he went, under a strong guard. It was always carried in a large camel trunk, placed on the leading camel, but known only to the people of Toshakhana. The whole string of camels, which generally consisted of about one hundered, being well guarded by troops. In camp, this box was placed, between two others alike, close to the pole of the tent, Mr. Bali Ram—the incharge of Toshakhana, having his bed very close to it, and none but his relatives and confidential servants having access to it. For four years it was worn as an armlet then fitted up as a sirpesh for the turban, with a diamond drop of a tola weight attached to it. It was worn in the manner for about a year, on three or four occasions, when it was again made up as an armlet, with a diamond on each side. Shortly before the decree of annexation went forth, Lord Dalhousie had written to Henry Lawrence to make every disposition for the safe custody of the State jewels, which were about to all into the lap of the English. Great care was, therefore needed, especially as among the Punjab jewels was the matchless Koh-i-noor, the "mountain of light," which it was intended should be expressly surrendered by the young Maharaja to the English Queen. (See Lady Login, 'Sir John Login and Dalip Singh,' pp. 193-98). The jewel was brought from the old Toshakhana by Dr. Login, and placed with the other valuables in the citadel, under guard. (*Ibid.*, p. 198) Shortly after this, Dalhousie came to Lahore and took its possession himself and latter sent it to the Queen.
4. Dr. Login to Lady Login, Camp, Feb 15, 1850.
5. Login to his wife, Fattehgarh, May 16, 1850.
6. Lady Login, p. 333.

7. D. to L., Sept., 1854.
8. Lady Login, pp. 335-36.
9. Dalip S. te L., Spence's Hotel, Feb., 1861.
10. Lady Login, pp. 487-88.
11. Sir Charles Wood, K.C.B., March 21, 1860.
12. See also his letter to Times, Appendix I.
13. When he lost hope of coming to Punjab, it is said he received baptism and returned to the Sikh faith at Aden itself.

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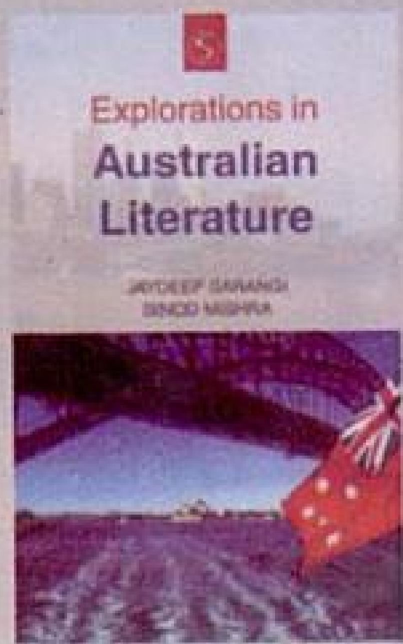
[illegible] is an eminent scholar of Modern Indian History. He is the author of several publications on Indian Nationalism and Freedom Movement. He has deep academic links with IIPA, Saugar and Bundelkhand Universities, I.C.H.R. and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. He has participated in National and International seminars. At present he is working on Indian Nationalism, 1885-1947. .

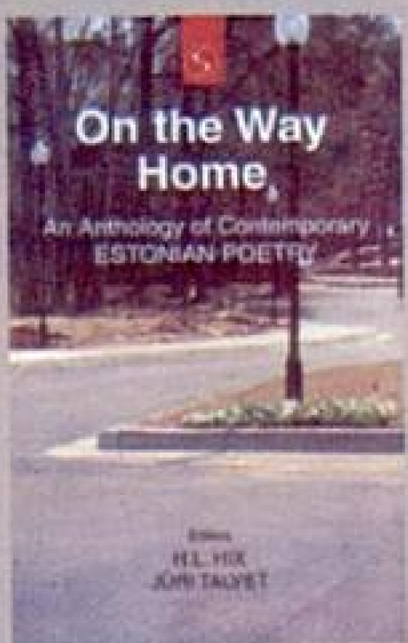
Ms. Rashmi Pathak is a well-known researcher and author of Modern Indian History and Indian Nationalism. She has participated in several seminars and contributed papers on Socio-economic themes. She has academic links with numerous institutions. At present she is working on Mahatma Phule.

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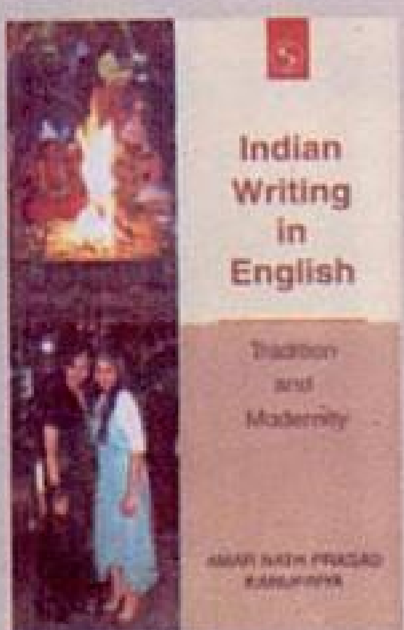
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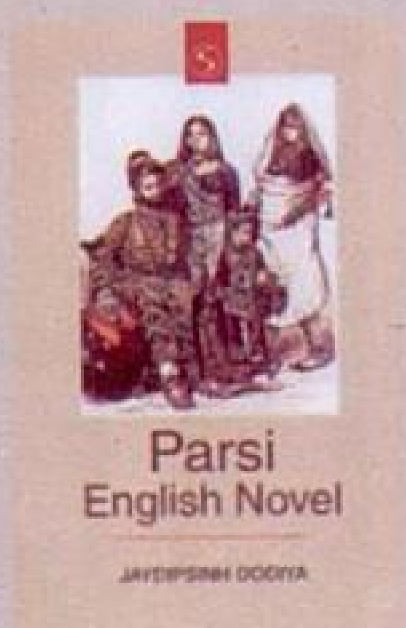
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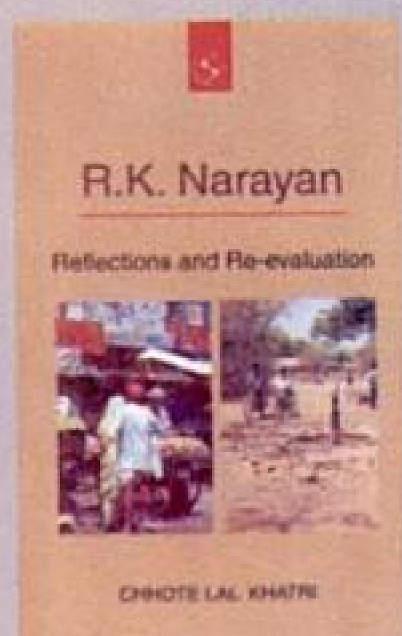












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